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IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST

IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST

A Course of Meditations for the
Christian Year

BY

DAVID JENKS

DIRECTOR OF THE SOCIETY OF THE SACRED MISSION



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YANKEE CHT NEO
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GOD,
WHO COMMANDED
THE LIGHT TO SHINE OUT OF DARKNESS,
HATH SHINED IN OUR HEARTS,
TO GIVE THE LIGHT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY OF GOD
IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST.

2 Cor. iv. 6.

Ad gloriam Dei in ejus voluntate

Preface

TEN years ago the practice was begun of supplying week by week the outline of a meditation for the use of students in the House of the Sacred Mission. It was hoped that such an outline might provide them with some thoughts for several meditations, and suggest reflections which otherwise might not occur to their minds. By degrees these printed slips became known to people outside the House, and by request they were distributed more widely. They are now offered, with additions, in a collected form.

In a little book of devotional readings, called *A Study of Meditation*,¹ the writer has anticipated all that he might have wished to say here by way of introduction. He ventures to refer to it any who are troubled by the difficulties which beset this great aid to the companionship of Jesus Christ in daily life.

He takes this opportunity to express his great indebtedness to one who with great patience has read the whole book in manuscript, and has given him the benefit of his mature judgment at every point. Through his assistance many crudities of expression, and ambiguities of language, have been avoided, and it is hoped that theological statements will not be liable to misinterpretation.

The title which is now given to these meditations expresses what is desired to be their main character; they are an attempt to bring home to the devout servant of Christ the revelation of God as it has been made in the person of his only Son, who is always ready to unfold it through the experience of daily life to those who make a practice of personal communion with him in the fellowship of an active response to grace.

May the almighty God and Father pardon every thought that has been written contrary to his will, or that is imperfect or misleading in theological expression! If in any place there is anything which is unintentionally out of harmony with the faith of the Church, the writer desires to withdraw it unreservedly. If it please the Giver of all good, in spite of many faults and imperfections, to bless any of these thoughts in their use by the faithful, he asks that as a thanksgiving to Almighty God a prayer may be offered for the Society of the Sacred Mission, and for its work among foreign missions, and on behalf of the students who have placed themselves under its guidance during their preparation for the sacred ministry.

HOUSE OF THE SACRED MISSION,
KELHAM,
NEWARK-ON-TRENT.

S. Michael's Day, 1914.

¹ Published by Mowbray & Co., London and Oxford.

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The Son of Man

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

"Who is this?"—S. Matt. xxi. 10.

Picture: the entry into Jerusalem.

Resolve: to think of Jesus Christ, the Man, this Advent.

I.—*The scene.*

- (a) The first Advent gospel brings forcibly before us the immediate purpose of the Incarnation: "For this cause came I into the world." In view of that purpose the scene has for us an appalling character in its mixture of curiosity, excitement, indifference, passing favour, but readiness to be stirred up to religious violence. It seems in part to represent permanent attitudes towards the Gospel.
- (b) Nevertheless the crowd did not mean to attack goodness. That aspect which impresses us so strongly was lost upon them, for they did not perceive even his goodness, still less did they understand him. They only knew of him through the religious prejudice of their teachers, and from certain stories which shocked their traditions. They were sight-seers who did not even ask their question with any serious intention.
- (c) Through this crowd, unheeded as a force, he rode in meekness and submission to its conditions. It is we who can see in this picture a partial answer to the question: he is one whose Person is revealed in humility, whoever he may be. He will conquer by conviction of character, and not by the display of any evidence of works.

II.—*The Son of Man.*

- (a) The title is especially applied to him in this connection. But to us it conveys more even than ideal humanity: it connotes to Christians the divine relation of humanity. There is the self-revelation of all the Gospel in his Person; that God could become man is the evidencing that man's purpose can be fulfilled, and that this purpose is the expression of true and full manhood.
- (b) We must study for a lifetime this revelation of what man is meant to be, and must study it in the imitation of the life of the Son of Man in its many-sidedness: but never may we lose sight of the truth that it is man in his fulness, man in relation to human life, although the revelation involves aspects of life not much regarded outside Christ.
- (c) Exhibition of human life is an inadequate expression of that life of the Son of Man which is the revelation of the power of God in man, which is to be ours through the Man who is God made man. Imitation can only mean here the proving of the power, the finding real and operative that gift which is the spirit of Christ and therefore of God.

III.—*Who for us men and for our salvation.*

- (a) Bidden on Advent Sunday ask "Who is this?" of him as he enters Jerusalem on that journey at the end of which he was to be consummated. We, being as we are, may not think of him solely as the revelation of man, and the gift of God in man; but must recognize the gift as brought to us through the mystery of his life interpreted by its close. This should suffice to save us from the adoration of Christ merely as the Example.
- (b) Inasmuch as this redemption is wrought out in human nature we must learn therefrom that our incorporation into him is not merely into the fruit of his redemption but into him as Redeemer; that in him the character of his life of oblation is to be reproduced in us. Thus this Gospel is in no whit foreign to the season, but casts a fuller light upon the humble and neglected birth-chamber.
- (c) Who will dare to look with pity upon the infant who is thus to suffer and die, and not rather to adore yet more devoutly? For what is even any life worth except what it can endure, suffer to save, and so rise to its highest fulfilment through the surrender of self to the bearing of the burden of life's deformities which mar the presentation of true humanity.

The Brother

FIRST MONDAY IN ADVENT

"I will declare thy Name unto my brethren."—Heb. ii. 12.

Consider the brotherhood established between the Son and the many sons through his adoption of our nature. He is not ashamed to call us *brethren*.

Make an act of faith in Christ as the Church's brother. Consider what use you make of fellowship with him.

I.—*Unto my brethren.*

- (a) The quotation is from Ps. xxii. 22, which pictures the passion of Christ and its triumphant issue in the fellowship of praise and worship. The quotations in vers. 12, 13 are purposely chosen from David and Isaiah, the people's king and the great prophet. The persecutions of David identified him with the people; the sufferings of the Messiah make him in all things like unto his brethren (Heb. ii. 17, 18).
- (b) It was after the Resurrection that Christ emphatically declared this fellowship, when death had perfected his experience, and when the Resurrection seemed to separate him from those who previously, in incomplete knowledge, had made acquaintance with his intimacy; "But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend" (S. John xx. 17). It is the present life of Christ which is the established fellowship of brotherhood.
- (c) The Church is the sphere of this brotherhood. The outcast and persecuted David has ascended to his throne, and identified his people with himself. The Incarnation was for the establishment of the Church; the ascended Jesus unites with himself through his humanity the society of the redeemed. The most perfect intimacy exists between him and his Church.

II.—*Not ashamed.*

- (a) We picture to ourselves the eternal unique Son, exalted above us as far as the immeasurable distance between Creator and created. But this is not to detract from our confidence in his brotherhood, which is the responsive movement in him of his human nature. To doubt this fellowship is to deny the reality of his incarnation, and to substitute a docetic alliance for the truth of his taking our nature into *himself*.
- (b) Nor ashamed because of the fallen estate of man. The suffering of Christ is the experience of fellowship; it is inconceivable that he should be ashamed of his suffering. He became passible that he might be able to succour them that are tempted. Illustration: it is the experienced rescue-worker who most nearly attains to the Christ-like consciousness and fellowship of sisterhood with these poor women.
- (c) Because he knows what is in man through the adoption of human nature; he has experienced what man is to be. He is not ashamed of a present blur, who knows that after more rinsings the clear photograph will appear. In his own Person the elder brother sees what the brethren will be: "We know that when he shall be manifested we shall be like him" (1 S. John iii. 2).

III.—*Christ the Church's brother.*

- (a) The Incarnation is a fitting alliance of the two natures. The uniqueness of the Son must not obscure our sonship; we too are "of him" (Heb. ii. 11) by creative destiny. To men and not to angels is the spiritual dispensation given. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?"
- (b) He is Son in two natures; we too twice born as sons. His discipline as Son in that he hath suffered is analogous to the discipline of man's life. By second birth united to him, in fellowship of redemption, our brother is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.
- (c) Consider then the true *fellowship* between the Church and her brother. Is it not cold to regard this as obligation? Use the fellowship, and the Church will find it a blessed privilege and imperishable strength. *He* stands in the midst of the congregation, declaring God's Name, that is, bringing to us the revelation of God in his manifested power. The Church is thus the family, the household, of God. What community of interest! What intimacy! What restfulness! What strength and support and victory! And it may be realized by each brother.

The Fellow-Worshipper

FIRST TUESDAY IN ADVENT

"In the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee."—Heb. ii. 12.

Consider Jesus Christ as the leader of the Church's worship, through whom it proceeds to God the Father. We may consider him now as the priest, now as the leader of the congregation (the whole congregation is choir); we may consider him as offering our prayers, formulating them for us, as unfolding the Scriptures to us.

Make an act of faith in Christ as the Church's fellow-worshipper. Consider your own spirit of worship.

I.—Consider Christ as the mediator.

- (a) In creation. "All things were made through him," and we too. And he sustains all things; "Upholding all things by the word of his power." The Church fears the world, but the world is in the hand of the Word. This original mediatorship of the Son is the universal basis upon which the Church is founded, and the gates of Hades cannot prevail against it.
- (b) In the redemption of mankind. The Incarnation is the medium of restoration through which the Church is come into existence. He tasted death for every man that he might deliver his creation from the bondage of corruption; and he stands to the new creation as to the old, its author and sustainer.
- (c) In this relationship he is the merciful and faithful High Priest of the Church's worship. He gathers together in himself the brethren, and in the midst of the congregation presents the worship of redeemed humanity, thus mediating here too. We more commonly think of him as the High Priest presenting himself on our behalf in the Holy of Holies; in these words, however, he is presented as identified with the throng of worshippers in the body of the temple.

II.—The expression of Christian worship.

- (a) Worship is the aspiration of man to God: it is manifold in variety, according to the revelation vouchsafed. In the Person of the Son of Man the worship of humanity finds perfect expression. His Spirit inspires the Christian Church, and in fellowship with the congregation he presents their worship in his own Person.
- (b) So too he is the support of fellow-man in his worship. Worship is a rising above one's self Godwards. He has experienced the discipline of it, and is able to feel with us in our infirmities (see Heb. v. 7). As the Fellow-worshipper he comes to aid us in formulating our words of approach to the Father, and by his brotherhood with us opens our hearts towards God. Contrast the spirit of Jewish and Christian worship.
- (c) In the light of these thoughts consider your own spirit of devotion. Study to use the fellowship of Christ in worship; pray with him: praise with him; no Christian ever prays or praises alone. Be not timid in approaching God; the Fellow-worshipper is with you.

III.—The character of Christian worship.

- (a) With him in the congregation to direct its worship, one must realize something of its character. It is above us, there is an elevation in its tone to which we must aspire by the exertion of fellowship. Worship is the interpretation of ourselves as we are in him, not as we may have so far experienced in conscious sensation.
- (b) Eucharistic worship thus most fully explains the relationship. It includes all aspects of worship. It is the offering to God of the sacrifice of redeemed humanity, which is at the same time the offering to him of the perfected sacrifice of the Divine victim in his own Person. In the Holy Offering with Communion is realized to the fullest the fellowship of the congregation in which he praises.
- (c) The heavenly character of Christian worship is thus signified. The Fellow-worshipper occupies (as we must express it) so to speak two positions. He is with us here in our worship: he gathers us up together in himself before the presence of God in presenting our worship. It is "in the heavenlies" not locally but by character, even as the Christian dispensation is "in the heavenlies." Once more the Eucharist best interprets.

Waiting

FIRST WEDNESDAY IN ADVENT

"Waiting for the consolation of Israel."—S. Luke ii. 25.

Picture: Simeon as a type of the Church.

Pray: for the true spirit of waiting.

I.—*"But now we see not yet all things put under him."*—Heb. ii. 8.

- (a) God waits. This is most wonderful to us. There is always something divine in the true spirit of waiting. He waited very long for the formation of the Jewish nation, then for its possession of a proper country of its own, then for the preparation of a people ready for his Son's advent. And he still waits; and the Son waits, from henceforth expecting (Heb. x. 13).
- (b) The saints in heaven wait (Apoc. vi. 10). They share in the divine expectancy, not with impatience, for—unlike us—they realize in the vision of the ascended Lord the fulness of the truth of his words, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."
- (c) The individual Christian waits and must wait. He waits for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. i. 7). His citizenship is in heaven, and the heir waits for the fulness of his inheritance, and for the change of this body of present and comparative humiliation until it is changed like unto the body of his glory. He waits until he, whom he knows now in part as Saviour, shall manifest himself fully in him (Phil. iii. 20, 21).

II.—*The Church waits.*

- (a) She is the Church of the future; hence her perpetual hopefulness. Every single member safely gathered in is sheer gain. Nothing of her past victory is ever lost: she is always increasing her possessions in that true home.
- (b) Waiting is not complacency, as though satisfied with present success. It is death to be satisfied yet. Like her Master, she waits expecting; she gathers in, she winnows, and the wheat she stores up in the barns which are not in the Church militant.
- (c) She prepares herself, confident in her waiting, knowing that the time when he will return is nearer than it was. She waits, knowing his word, that to all except the watchful his coming will be the surprise of unreadiness. How far am I in union with the true spirit of the Advent Church?

III.—*What waiting involves.*

- (a) Expectation. Where the treasure is there will the heart be also. Meditate upon the consummation, and be not conformed to present conditions. To wait implies that the present does not satisfy, and that the future is better. But expectation needs encouragement; it needs feeding. Lift up the heart heavenward; dwell upon the treasure laid up.
- (b) Endurance (S. Jas. v. 7). One cannot wait without this, in view of earth's conditions and the need of one's own transformation by the renewal of the mind. Our religion is experienced now as an aspiration after attainment and a stretching forward to what is beyond. How different is this endurance from the complacency of indifference, which assumes that one is eagerly longing for that which nevertheless has no power to affect one's life!
- (c) Detachment. This helps to interpret endurance. How can one wait expectantly if one is not becoming detached from the present? And it is the very need of detachment which gives to expectation one part of its strain of endurance. But I am not to seek after detachment as an end in itself, but to be becoming detached because increasingly drawn towards the certain expectation for which I wait.

The Blessed Sacrament till He come

FIRST THURSDAY IN ADVENT

"Till he come."—1 Cor. xi. 26.

Picture: the three bells of a country church striking out these words repeatedly as they invite us to Church.

Pray: that he may become more the centre of your spiritual life.

I.—*"Till he come."*

- (a) Till. It strikes the note of perseverance. There is no stage in life at which I can rest content as having attained. But more than this; the word "till" rings with the great hope. Life is leading on to a goal; there is an attainment there. And life has purpose; the present anticipates the future; the future explains the present.
- (b) He come. Faith's anticipation. He will come; present experience confirms the testimony of prophecy. And it is no future event, still less a mere ending of the present; it is he himself, whom now I strive to know, and following go on to know; he who unfolds himself within me, as he interprets himself through life to me.
- (c) Till he come. Faith's reward. Till he come, and then "Oh! the glad to-morrow." How sentimental must Advent seem to those to whom Christmas is merely a cheerful memorial of a past event, and not the birthday of a living Lord and Saviour; who strive to resuscitate a past, but who can neither see Christ among men now, nor find in him the guarantee of his coming in majesty!

II.—*The Holy Communion.*

- (a) Here the Advent frame of mind finds its continual exercise in the comings of the ever-present Word made flesh. It is the secret source of perseverance, the continual realization of the future in the present, the unfolding of the purpose of the life that now is, and its oneness with that which is to come.
- (b) It is faith's anticipation. Here the believer realizes Christ, holds on to him. Here unite in one the great humility and the glorious majesty; here he holds fast the blessed hope of everlasting life. The Incarnation is bestowed upon us. What the mind cannot stretch to, the heart receives.
- (c) Till he come. Faith's reward; even sacraments will cease in heaven. For now we see through a mirror darkly, but then face to face. Into this one cannot penetrate, but it is a solemn reminder to us of the character of the sacraments, as expressed in the Prayer of S. Thomas, that I may receive "not only the Sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood, but also the virtue of the Sacrament."

III.—*"Ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come."*

- (a) To Almighty God in Eucharistic worship and sacrifice. The Church on earth between the two Advents is the fruit of the Passion connecting in one that which we regard as two separate manifestations. And that which is shewn forth to God is not the Blessed Sacrament apart from the Body of Christ the Church, nor the Church apart from the sacrifice of Christ.
- (b) To the world. The Church is the visible evidence of the fruits of Christ's death, as it is the continual proof of his Incarnation. It is well to reflect that the Church has the responsibility of representing Christ to the world in the true life of humanity and in his passion; and that I in my measure have the same duty.
- (c) And then—Faith's reward. At the second Advent he will gather together his elect from the four corners of the world, and the company of the blessed will shew forth in its consummated redemption the resplendence of his manhood. Then perseverance will have passed into a higher activity; anticipation will be realized in an experience which does not lose its freshness.

The Fellow-Believer

FIRST FRIDAY IN ADVENT

"And again, I will put my trust in him."—Heb. ii. 13.

Consider the Brother and Fellow-worshipper as also the Fellow-believer. It is fitting that the Fellow-worshipper should be the Fellow-believer; as Brother too he must also put his trust in God.

Make an act of faith in Christ's trust in God even unto death, and examine your trust in him.

I.—*The Incarnate life a life of trust in God.*

- (a) The writer has given his lessons in the form of quotations from David the suffering king, and Isaiah the representative prophet at a critical moment of history. By such illustrations he draws attention to the Messiah as realizing the sum of human experience, and as the fulfiller of the destiny of mankind.
- (b) The Incarnate life was the manifestation of perfect trust in God. It may be seen in his submission to the limitations and conditions of human life, domestic, social, national; in his prayers, his obedience to the Father's will, his dependence on him; in his consciousness of mission, his independence of human judgments, his conviction of successful issue.
- (c) Isaiah trusted in God during Assyria's tyranny, and led his brethren to put their hope on him (Isa. viii. 11-18. The quotation is from verse 17 Greek). Fit type of him who through the dark conflict with the world's sin would neither compromise with the world, nor relax his trust in God in the failure of public ministry, and the hour of darkness and death; "My God, my God."

I.—*Trust and faith.*

- (a) Trust is the response of relationship. The Elder Brother has manifested for us the life of sonship; he who reveals the Father has lived under human conditions the life of filial trust, and lived it for his brethren, that united with him we too may respond to our new birth, "Begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."
- (b) Trust is the active expression of faith. This trust in God was neither fatalism nor credulity. On the one side it was voluntary, "I lay down my life"; on the other it was the consciousness of existing facts, "I know him, and if I should say I know him not I shall be a liar like unto you." The Christian life possesses the gift of trust as the very prompting of the nature of our sonship. We cry, "Abba, Father."
- (c) Christ himself is the conviction of the Christian's trust in God. In him we see the perfected life of sonship. And we are to grow up into him in all things, as the younger brethren. In him we see what we are to become in realization and development, what we are even now in state (see 1 S. John iii. 2).

III.—*Christ and the Church's faith.*

- (a) The Church supported by the trust of Christ in God cannot fail. Her faith is the measure of her worship, the confident assurance of her continual approach to God; the Fellow-worshipper is the Fellow-believer, and against such faith the gates of Hades cannot prevail; they failed in the hour of his death.
- (b) And he is the guardian of the Church's faith. To be ready to shed portions of the faith at the urgency of the world is to deny the verity of the Fellow-believer; the Church cannot believe other than he believes. When the faith seems failing, remember the great Isaiah, the preacher of "The remnant;" "Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh shall he find that faith on the earth" which always prays and never faints (S. Luke xviii. 8 and 1)?
- (c) How different is this truth of the Church as the embodiment of the Christ from the loosely held ideas of the Church! When faith fails and we seem to be losing trust in the Church, regarding it as a decaying power, then lift up the eye to the Fellow-believer, who holds all secure in himself, and speaking as the mouthpiece of the Church says, "I will put my trust in him."

The Parent

FIRST SATURDAY IN ADVENT

"Behold, I and the children which God hath given me."—Heb. ii. 13. Isa. viii. 18.

Consider the Infant Christ as holding the Church in his hand, nay, as containing in his own person the as yet unborn Church.

Resolve: to worship the Christ this Christmas as him who was made flesh that he might beget the Church.

I.—*The begotten begets.*

- (a) The Only-begotten is now begotten in time: as you adoringly wonder at the birth of humility and love, and bow down before the Incarnate God, honouring him with divine worship, bring your thoughts also to bear upon the issue of this humble infancy. The taking of manhood into himself will be interpreted by the ingathering of the Church of the redeemed.
- (b) As it was fitting that he who is like unto his brethren should share with them every stage of human experience even from the conception, so is it fitting that he, who is eternally begotten of the Father in the Sonship which is of spiritual nature, should be also he who as parent begets us for the Father in the adoption of sons through the medium of his human nature raised from the dead.
- (c) The consideration of Christ as the Church's parent is that of the redemption of human nature by him, whereby, through incorporation with the Incarnate One, we are begotten of God: hence in the new birth too Christ is the Mediator. He is the bridge between us and the Father, as Origen said; and these words express the Father's relationship as well as the Son's; "I and the children which God hath given me."

II.—*Christ the parent.*

- (a) The brother is presented here as the parent. He is not one with us as not being more than one of us, but one with us—as we may develop the simile—as parent who so identifies himself with his children as to be their brother, and as parent who is also brother to his children in the sharing of a common nature.
- (b) Not that he is to be regarded as parent of our spiritually regenerate nature and brother of our human nature, for it is our human nature which is itself regenerated. But rather that each metaphor expresses to our minds some aspects of a reality which exceeds our powers of apprehension. Father, Brother, he is all this and more. While brother suggests fellow-feeling, parent adds the thought of responsible and anxious care.
- (c) Further, this word "parent" brings before the mind the cycle of truths which gather round the idea of the forerunner who for us hath entered into heaven (Heb. vi. 20); we consider him into whom we are to grow up in all things, and whose experience we inherit.

III.—*The Church's parent.*

- (a) Isaiah used the words in reference to the faithful remnant which God gave him out of Israel. This remnant is realized in the lively members of the Church; and the divine character and unity of the Church are emphasized in this quotation; a family united in Christ who is its head.
- (b) At Christmas we realize this great dignity of the Church, as we consider him as very God of very God, stretching out to reach and embrace us. We magnify his greatness when we see him before us in the cradle, and know that while he comes to us in weakness he is still possessed of all his powers, which he has put at our disposal.
- (c) This dignity of the Church is one of our Advent thoughts from the consideration of the Incarnation as revealing to us her character. In his coming forth from the Father he has begotten us, as a second Adam, the founder of a new race. May these thoughts guard us from slackness, worldliness or despondency!

Fruits of Bible Reading

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

"That we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."—Rom. xv. 4.

Consider the experience of Bible reading from the Jewish exile up till to-day.

Pray: for the continual advent of Christ to you in Holy Scripture.

I.—*The Word of God.*

- (a) We have done now with the abuse of this truth by the misinterpretation of "word" by its application to a symbol composed of letters. It is God's living revelation wherein he speaks to the heart through the heart experiences of some of those to whom in varied degrees and stages of his self-unfolding he has manifested himself.
- (b) He need not indeed have made writings one means of his revelation, would not have done so had he not intended us to use them to our profit. Yet as the human intelligence has learned to communicate in writing, it is irrational to suppose that he should have failed to use just this means of communication with man through man.
- (c) Nor is it any ground of suspicion against Holy Scripture that it has been made the subject of gross abuse, ignorant bigotry and an almost idolatry. Theology has suffered the same fate, and the Sacraments likewise. It is always the best which is liable to the grossest abuse.

II.—*The rich variety of Holy Scripture.*

- (a) We may look upon Holy Scripture as the climax of the inspiration of human experience and rational exercise, much as we regard the Sacraments as the concentration of the general truth that the material is the medium of the Divine communication.
- (b) Life is redeemed from blank fortuity by the conviction that experience and history are the speech of God. We are confirmed in this conviction by the character of Holy Scripture, historical and experimental. The immense humanity of the Bible, and its bold acceptance of the chequered life of man, is a confirmation to us that life is not sordid, but that God is in his world.
- (c) There are those to whom intellectual and aesthetic dowdiness would seem to be the fitting associates of religious thought; and yet the Bible revels in poetry, in the delight of nature, in the blaze of music; it does not despise the evolution of the human interpretation of the divine voice in man, his speculation, self-questioning, or work of imagination.

III.—*The fruits of Bible reading.*

- (a) And these fruits which S. Paul marks are from the Old Testament, which has been the volume almost entirely under consideration in these thoughts. And first he marks patience—endurance. For the reverent study of Holy Scripture confirms the conviction of the innermost yearnings of the human mind after God, and that, though he hide himself, he is never absent and never defeated.
- (b) And comfort—encouragement and exhortation. It is as though one lost sight of him in the turmoil of life until one was reminded again in Holy Scripture that daily secular experience is the living voice of God, to hear which one must be stirred up lest he speak in vain, because our hearts cannot hear him.
- (c) Endurance and encouragement; they are two sides to one efficient cause. The truth of Holy Scripture brings the living stimulus of God into man; and thence comes hope, buoying one up by the breath of the Spirit in the life crushed by the mechanism of the daily round.

Hope

SECOND MONDAY IN ADVENT

"The God of [all hope fill you . . . that ye may abound in hope."—Rom. xv. 13.

Picturo: a man on a dark plain, enheartened and guided by the lights shining in his home.

Resolve: to pray for the grace of hope.

I.—*God himself abounds in hope on our behalf.*

- (a) By reason of himself. He alone truly knows his long-suffering patience, and its inexhaustibleness. He too alone can weigh the power of his grace, the unswerving character of his purposes for man, and the atoning and sanctifying merits of the Incarnation of his Son.
- (b) We have, nevertheless, strong proofs of his hope in the fact of the Incarnation: "For us men and for our salvation came down from heaven." And this pledge is sealed by the life of the Incarnate Son, his resurrection and ascension in his human nature. In Christ himself humanity is seated at the right hand of God.
- (c) We have a great assurance of his hope on our behalf in the long-suffering mercy which he extends to us in our weakness. We may consider this both in the history of the Church, wherein is manifested the divine patience both towards the world and to his children by adoption, and likewise in his tenderness to one's self through one's waywardness and weakness.

II.—*God is our hope.*

- (a) Ultimately all our hope is based on God, even our hope of mercy through Jesus Christ. Hope is just having confidence in God and not in ourselves. God can do all things for and with us; we cannot do anything of ourselves to please him. Higher than all spiritual gifts of ministry and activity are the fundamental gifts of faith, hope, and charity.
- (b) And it is God himself who is our hope. Not even heaven is our final hope, but only heaven because it is where he is fully revealed. Learn to think more of God, and less of one's own salvation, except in so far as our salvation is the knowledge of God.
- (c) God supplies us with hope. Hope is a grace; it is one of the theological virtues, and not a natural virtue. It is a gift of God. Hope is therefore a proper subject of prayer. The best way to increase hope is to pray to God that one may have him more in mind, and think less of self, of one's progress or coldness in response.

III.—*Our future hope is also a present possession.*

- (a) All that we look for in the future is already ours in Jesus Christ (see Heb. vi. 18). We have already laid hold of the hope which lies before us. Hope appropriates these anticipations by keeping fast to God in whom is every object of hope.
- (b) The present possession of this hope makes us hopeful. Hopefulness is a temper, which gives strength and perseverance in the face of present difficulties. "God is our hope and strength; a very present help in trouble" (Ps. xlv. 1, P.B.V.). And Christian tempers are to be cultivated; we are not to pray in order that we may be saved from trouble, but with the purpose of co-operating with God.
- (c) God is the satisfaction of our hopes now as always. Apply to the complexity of Church problems, or to the coldness of Christians towards foreign missions, or to the experiences of our own lives. But there is a parody of hope, which is just the superficial light-heartedness of the careless, and of those who are filled with this world's good. Hope, based on God, is a grace enabling one to meet disappointment, trial, and perplexity.

The Son of Man as the Sign

SECOND TUESDAY IN ADVENT

"The sign of the Son of Man in heaven."—S. Matt. xxiv. 30.

Picture: the second coming of Christ.

Resolve: acts of faith.

I.—*The Son of Man is himself the sign. It always has been so.*

- (a) "This is the sign unto you; ye shall find a babe" (S. Luke ii. 12). The Babe himself was the sign of the Saviour, of God's saving mercy to mankind in stretching forth to take him up into union with himself. What does not this Birth tell us of the true humanity of the Son of Man!
- (b) "There shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of Jonah" (S. Matt. xvi. 4). His preaching was his sign, and "he that is of God heareth the words of God" (S. John viii. 47). His perfect revelation of humanity is the sign of his Person, as also his teaching too is the sign, that he came from God.
- (c) A sign is not to be rested in, but to be treated as a sign of something: the human nature of Christ, his true sympathy with all human experiences, are signs: through them we are to pass by grace into the inner truths of his Person: he is the Eternal Word manifesting in human nature the true character of the Father. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Seek through Christ to follow him as the way to the Father. Thus shall he be to us the very Sign.

II.—*The present sign of the Son of Man is the history of men.*

- (a) In the lives of individuals. We often seek a sign from heaven: but the sign is here if we will read it, in the power of Sacramental life to raise us above sloth and earthliness, in the efficacy of prayer in his Name, in Christian lives of cheerful unselfishness, the weak made strong, the power to snap the chains of sin.
- (b) In the course of history. Christianity as men have portrayed it has many blots upon it: Satan even has entered into the second Paradise. But what has been the regenerator of society, or has ameliorated the lot of women? What was the power which checked infanticide, and stopped the gladiatorial shows? The Babe born of Mary.
- (c) The signs of the times. Not by numerical interpretation of apocalyptic passages in the Bible. When asked for a sign, he said, "Ye know how to discern the face of the heaven: but ye cannot discern the signs of the times" (S. Matt. xvi. 3). Such power is a gift to those who have fellowship with God: to them it is given to interpret the abiding revelation to each age, to meet every need as it arises, ever bringing forth out of the treasury of God things new and old: for the Son of Man abideth ever.

III.—*So will it be in the end.*

- (a) The sign of the end will be himself. The sign is the Son of Man. The O.T. used apocalyptic language, and the Jews did not recognize him. Similar language is used of his second coming. It may be that the language of the O.T. and of the N.T. will be literally fulfilled then: but we are not to rest in this, watching for such signs. We are to look for him, hastening unto his coming.
- (b) The sign which his coming will reveal will be through the true interpretation of man and his history. Then will wisdom be justified of all her works. The judgment seat of Christ will need no officers to execute his orders: the dealings of God with man will be manifest then, and all will confess that his judgment is just and holy. Then will it be seen that even through the perplexities of life, its sorrows and its sufferings, he hath done all things well.
- (c) And the Son of Man will be the sign. Then will be the true understanding of him, who is the epitome of mankind, who gathers up into himself the whole course of history. Then too will be the true understanding of ourselves, when we recognize the Son of Man as him into whom we have been growing up.

Patience

SECOND WEDNESDAY IN ADVENT

"The God of patience."—Rom. xv. 5.

Picture: as suggested by the words "The Lord sitteth above the water-flood: and the Lord remaineth a King for ever."

Pray: for the grace of patience.

I.—Consider God's patience.

- (a) In waiting until his appointed time for the Incarnation of his only Son. He strove with man, and man rebelled against him, and defied him: yet he waited in his long-suffering. And he loved the sons of men, and willed to raise them to a new estate through his Son: yet he waited through many generations.
- (b) With those who reject his offer of salvation. This same patience is still manifested, aggravated as the offence is with those who have both seen and hated both Jesus Christ and the Father. By long-suffering he would lead to repentance. Patient still, while men crucify the Son of God afresh.
- (c) Patient with his Church and with his children. The Church has often been worldly, often cold, sometimes faithless; but he has never withdrawn his grace. And what patience with myself, not only in lack of zeal and lukewarmness in prayer, but in loose walking, worldliness and cowardice! It surpasses imagination.

II.—Consider the basis of this patience.

- (a) The divine strength. Because of this he *can* be patient. To be impatient is to be doubtful of one's strength. The world may rage; but God holds it in the hollow of his hand. The world may set him at naught; but the issue of all things according to his purpose is ever present with him.
- (b) The divine love. Because of this he *wills* to be patient. Impatience is the exhaustion of love: the divine love is inexhaustible. The world may be indifferent, but "God so loved the world." His own people may be inappreciative, but he loves them with an everlasting love. Sometimes his love will be severe, because his patience looks to the end of his discipline.
- (c) Consider the relation of this strength and this love to patience by analogy from human experience. We correctly regard impatience as a sign of weakness, and patience as part of the self-control of strength. We can endure to be contradicted or misunderstood, if we *know* that we are right. Again, an impatient man will be patient with the waywardness of a loved child, and a wife with the peevishness of an invalid husband. But in God strength and love are not to be separated: with us, each in separation, and both only partial, the patience of strength will often be parodied by the indifference of superiority, and the patience of love by the weakness of indulgence.

III.—The Christian's patience.

- (a) It is a grace (cf. Rom. xv. 4 with 5). As every other grace it is to be sought from God, yet not found apart from its exercise. "Be patient," says the apostle. God gives of himself: he does not impart external gifts, but what he is; for the end of all grace is to be made like unto him.
- (b) It is the outcome of strength. The Christian's patience is just the supply of divine strength: his impatience is just his own weakness. And grace is the gift of divine strength, so that the apostle can say, "When I am weak, then am I strong."
- (c) And patience is related to love: it is a reflected glow of the divine love. The Christian will seek to be patient because his divine Master was patient, and because God is infinitely patient with him. Patience will be one outcome of his life of devotion. Thus the holy souls are entirely patient under the hand of God.

Man

SECOND THURSDAY IN ADVENT

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him?"—Ps. viii. 4; Heb. ii. 6.

Consider the psalmist contemplating the heavens.

Resolve this Advent to consider the Incarnation as a revelation of man.

I.—*The littleness of man.*

- (a) Compared with the forces of nature how puny he is! He cannot even for one instant change the laws of her existence. He cannot change the seasons or alter the weather. On the mighty ocean, beside the snow-capped mountains, in the pathless desert, he realizes his material insignificance.
- (b) By comparison, too, with animal nature, how deficient are his powers! There is animate life to overcome his strength, to outstrip his pace, to endure longer life; his sight and hearing are excelled. And the habits of animals are wonderfully adapted to their requirements and the advancement of their species, whereas we too often live neither wisely nor contentedly.
- (c) Studied in himself there is much also to encourage this line of thought. Man is uncertain in the execution of his plans; his greatest purposes are likely to be thwarted by the variableness of human temper and character. He is liable to interruption by sickness, and even the highest skill can only for a time, and under favourable circumstances, ward off death.

II.—*"Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour."*

- (a) Such a view of life is manifestly inadequate; it takes little account of the difference which separates man from the other creatures. For man can interpret these very forces by the side of which he seems so insignificant; to a marvellous degree he can direct them to his ends. By the dominance of will he can greatly control the activity of animal life.
- (b) Yet more remarkable as evidence of his greatness is his power to understand and move himself. He can form purposes and direct himself towards the accomplishment of ends which cannot be attained in his lifetime, and which permanently affect history. His emotions are rational, and all that he does makes individual character by the formation of habits through the activity of self-conscious will.
- (c) He is capable of ideals; in his mind he can pass beyond the limitations of his external surroundings, and can dwell in the abiding and the true. He only finds himself in that which seems beyond him; and in aspiration he finds boundless possibility of advancement.

III.—*"Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels."*

- (a) The psalm reads "a little lower than Elohim," that is "than what is Divine." These last thoughts lead to the consideration of man as near akin to God. While it does not follow that the natural order was created by an intelligent Being because we are able to interpret it, it does follow that if the natural order is thus created the human mind must be akin to the Divine intelligence by reason that it is able to a large degree to interpret his work.
- (b) It is of the essence of our belief in Almighty God that he is good; and we ourselves are capable of approving and disapproving of actions and motives on a basis higher than any appeal to material considerations. We are thus capable of fellowship with God in character as well as in intellect, and in both we are conscious of the possibility of further development.
- (c) It is involved in our belief in God that he is self-existent, and that he has created for his good pleasure. We find, however, that our limited personality only expresses itself aright so far as it advances beyond itself, and that the highest virtues have no scope apart from social relationships; we find, too, that the more we advance in this manner the nearer we approach to the Christian conception of the Godhead, and the more capable we become of appreciating a gospel of creation which will give to perfected humanity the widest interpretation of the words, "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet."

Man and the Incarnation

SECOND FRIDAY IN ADVENT

"But now we see not yet all things put under him."—Heb. ii. 8.

Picture : the light thrown by the cross of Christ on human life.

Resolve : to seize the lesson of hope involved in the Incarnation

I.—*Man's failure.*

- (a) In many ways man is conscious of being hampered in his development. In his limited personality he can find but an imperfect expression of himself. Further, physical decay makes each man dependent on his material existence; at the best he scarcely reaches the maturity of his powers with experience and wisdom before becoming aware that he has passed the meridian of life.
- (b) He is conscious of an apparently unattainable aspiration, whether in regard to himself or the race. Either human life is an irony, or there is a flaw in it, or the individual may, perhaps, be of no account beside the development of the race. To the Christian the first solution is untenable, and the third is disposed of by the fact that the revelation of Jesus Christ directs him to see the development of the race through the highest advance of the individual.
- (c) The consciousness of personal failure is a partial solution, which finds an extended application in the history of the race. Not only is man aware that he comes short of what he might be, and that others also do so, but he is conscious, too, that the depravity extends beyond the experience of the individual.

II.—*The Incarnation throws light upon the problem.*

- (a) In the one true Man is seen the satisfaction of human aspiration in the exhibition of character: it is the individual life of which human conscience approves. In its universality a confirmation is found of the wider personality of which we are conscious. And the life which was broadly human found its expression, in harmony with our own experience, in the surrender of self to live in and for the lives of others.
- (b) In the verity of the Incarnation the Christian is assured of the true nature of man. That which is speculatively only a hope becomes an assured fact. No stronger proof of the greatness of man's nature can be vouchsafed than that Almighty God can become incarnate in it, who is rational and good.
- (c) And it is a revelation of men's destiny. He has raised human nature into personal union with God, and revealed its goal in his own Incarnate history. The words of the psalmist which subject all creation to man are not fulfilled in Christ, but in him find the means of their fulfilment. In Christ redeemed humanity is the one man into which the Church is to grow in her maturity.

III.—*The fall required the supremacy to be obtained through suffering.*

- (a) In the present perplexity of life the Christian fixes his gaze upon One—a little lower than Elohim, not in virtue of the exaltedness of his nature, but by reason of the condescension which has stooped from highest heaven to man's estate—even the human Jesus, who has attained to this goal of humanity "because of the suffering of death." This revelation is one of hopefulness in the problem of life's suffering.
- (b) The experience of Jesus Christ gives, too, the widest scope to this hope. That which he endured is universal in its range, and is "by the grace of God." It is the present chequered career of life which is taken up and carried to the fulfilment of human destiny according to the Will of God.
- (c) It is idle to speculate whether suffering is solely a human discipline by reason of sin. But that the fall requires man's development to be attained through suffering is both conformable to human reason, and is confirmed by the experience of Jesus Christ, and in the highest degree by the revelation of his death.

Man through the Incarnation

SECOND SATURDAY IN ADVENT

"For verily not of angels doth he take hold, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham."—Heb. ii. 16 (R.V.).

Picture: the Son of God as true Man.

Resolve this Christmas to worship ardently the Divine Son of Mary.

I.—*For man* (Heb. ii. 16).

- (a) It was his purpose to assist man, and for this he lays hold of him. The Incarnation is not the revelation of a lost ideal but of a restored one; it is the revelation of a divine purpose so strong that the Son of God has come forth to the support of the human race after its failure.
- (b) Nothing is said here of his relation to creation other than mankind. The words, "not of angels doth he take hold," are not to exclude any wider scope than man in the Incarnation, but to emphasize its prime relation to the nature which he has adopted. But elsewhere glimpses of a wider truth are given, which enable us to see something of man's destiny, and the wide-reaching effects of sin unless overcome through the condescension of the Incarnation.
- (c) That "he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham" further illustrates the truth under consideration. Abraham is named because he is the father of the faithful; and the mention of the individual in whose seed all are to be blessed calls attention to the personal application of the Advent revelation.

II.—*For the redemption of fallen man* (Heb. ii. 17).

- (a) Rational man cannot be helped against his will, and cannot be redeemed apart from his nature, his state and his conditions of life. The Incarnation is the manifested brotherhood of Jesus Christ, through which he becomes our high priest; merciful, for he knoweth whereof we are made; trustworthy, for he has given us the surest guarantee of his devotion.
- (b) The whole scope of mankind is embraced in his priesthood. The Incarnation embraces, interprets, and elevates human life in its varied spheres, and gives the widest scope to its Godward application. In the fierce struggle of duty he is become to us through his human nature a merciful and faithful High Priest.
- (c) And further, that basal burden of sin is removed. Behind sympathy with human nature and the embrace of the wide range of human activities is the purpose of making propitiation for the sins of his people, whereby man's state is brought into harmony with God.

III.—*Applied in life's conflict* (Heb. ii. 18).

- (a) The Incarnation is not only a revelation of human life and the hope of its goal, not only the propitiation which removes from it that whereby we are separated from God, but inseparable from this latter it is also the daily help of man. The Incarnation is the taking hold of man through the adoption of his nature: the double translation given in A.V. and R.V. of verse 16 is very suggestive.
- (b) Stress is thus laid upon the permanent fruitfulness of the Incarnation through its acquaintance with life's conflict. That which he endured is an abiding experience which he imparts to mankind through union with himself. He is able to help them, who are being tried and tempted: the elevation and development of our human nature works in those who are brought near to God through him.
- (c) The true character of human sympathy is depicted: it is experience, not emotion. His exhaustive experience enables him to help our partial experience. Thus while we do not yet see all things placed under man's feet, we see in Jesus, through restoration to God and daily renewal in him, the way to the fulfilment of man's ideal, both personally and collectively.

Depression

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

"Art thou he that should come?"—S. Matt. xi. 3.

Picture: S. John Baptist in prison.

Pray: for grace to study Jesus Christ in relation to one's life.

I.—*John Baptist the Saint.*

- (a) What a history! What sanctity! Child of prayer; companion of the boy Jesus; the austere discipline of early manhood; the power to proclaim repentance; the honour to announce Jesus; the humility to decline before him; the readiness to see his disciples pass over to the increasing Person; his bold condemnation of sin; his persecution. What an Advent preparation for Christ!
- (b) Surely such an one must be intensely happy in the consciousness of sanctity! How fixed in his mind! So unlike me with my interior trials, my constant difficulties, my variableness of will, and my relapses! What need for me, indeed, of preparation at Advent, and indeed at all times, to receive my Blessed Lord!
- (c) We insult the Saint. We suppose that he goes on easily after the first. We almost think that it is due to temperament that he is a Saint, while we are so unsatisfactory. We little regard what he endures day by day of struggle and resistance, of perseverance and renewed fixing of the will; what he endures of dark hours and of desolation.

II.—*"Art thou he that should come?"*

- (a) There are advanced experiences which one seems to share with those who have scarcely begun. This is not what one would have expected of the Baptist, and is not the problem of the enquirer, but the perplexity of the man who has hitherto been convinced. So through the darkness does he lead his own. The man of active open-air life is pining in prison, his work closed with a sense of failure.
- (b) And there were no signs of national revival or of new spiritual life in the people. And he himself was neglected. And Jesus Christ did not seem to be doing much. Thus in the prison he was in the valley of shadow. How foolish am I to think that the Saints are always on the heights!
- (c) The training of character is very complex, and the spiritual life cannot go on by conventional stages. It must live its own history of reality. John Baptist was very much honoured by the severity of his trial; yet such is the reality of trial that he felt the difficulty, and not the honour. Do not be upset by trial, or by feeling it, but only by not bearing it.

III.—*"Shew John again."*

- (a) There was a past to dwell upon, a past of personal experience. There was his past of fruitfulness in the lives of others, who were now with Jesus. Spiritual experience, unlike emotional experience, is historical evidence. Renew it this Advent, and grasp its reality with the freshness of new experience.
- (b) Others also have experience: "Go shew John again those things which ye ——" It is quite real: John might be disheartened in prison, but the life was manifesting itself in others with power. Refresh yourself this Advent with the consideration of the work of the Incarnation in history and human life, and prepare for the Nativity.
- (c) The great fact of his own experience he could not see at the moment; the power to be loyal and to suffer; the power to go on; the honesty of his enquiry, holding back nothing from Jesus, and the faith manifested in asking him. Is it not matter of thanksgiving that another Advent finds me again preparing for the coming of Jesus Christ?

Judgment

THIRD MONDAY IN ADVENT

"He that judgeth me is the Lord: therefore judge nothing before the time."—
Cor. iv. 4, 5.

Picture: the judgment seat of God.

Resolve: to keep before my mind the judgment of God.

I.—*A warning against wrong judgments.*

- (a) There is a judgment of harshness, which is rather due to our own evil temper than to justice: sometimes even the judgment which sees the mote in one's brother's eye but, etc. There is a judgment, too, which comes of narrowness, a readiness to be scandalized at all which is not within the range of our own limited vision. Such judgments are an insult to truth.
- (b) There is a judgment which is personal: the unkind or unnecessary criticism which is the outcome of prejudice, dislike or spite. Or the self-indulgent criticism which does not consider another's feeling. Such judgments are an affront to charity.
- (c) There is the judgment of gossip, which sins against responsibility: the idle picking to pieces of another's character, calling attention to his faults, disparagement. "Every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (S. Matt. xii. 36).

II.—*"Judge nothing before the time."*

- (a) There is a final judgment: our assumption of the office of judge now does not remove us from the scope of that great judgment. Examination of conscience in view of that judgment is better employment than prejudging men, events or opinions.
- (b) And that judgment will judge our judgments. It is a sobering consideration that one day we shall witness the true judgment on that which we have judged inadequately, and then we shall have to give a reckoning of our self-assumed office of judge.
- (c) But the time is not yet. By judging now we presume to anticipate God. It is like man to act hastily through impatience in intellectual judgments, and so curtail his discipline of waiting, pondering, and reverently studying the manifestations of God's will in history which are his present pronouncements by way of judgment.

III.—*"He that judgeth me is the Lord."*

- (a) Who looketh at the heart. The judgment which is final is more searching than any human opinion, dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow. We may escape human judgments, even our own searching judgment, although no one knows as much against us as we ourselves know: but who shall stand before his judgment who maketh manifest the counsels of the heart?
- (b) Who judgeth not as man judgeth, partially, superficially, fallibly, with prejudice. God knoweth the heart: it is a consideration as much of encouragement as of terrible warning. While no hypocrisy of motive can deceive him, yet neither can that inability of man to rise to the height of his desires and purposes prevent the real man from being known to him. The real man is rather that which he ever tries to express in his life than the impression which he makes upon others: and it is the inner man of the heart which God judgeth.
- (c) Who is also the Saviour of man. To be judged by the Saviour will be a terrible ordeal even to the righteous. Consider how great is the ruin which sin has caused, and how hard was the work of salvation which the Saviour accomplished, and we may begin to understand how high a matter is salvation in his sight. But not beyond our hope, who bear him in our hearts before his judgment-seat.

Individuality

THIRD TUESDAY IN ADVENT

“Who art thou?”—S. John i. 19.

Picture: the enquiry of John Baptist.

Resolve: to consider the importance of individual character.

I.—Apply to S. John Baptist.

- (a) They knew him and his history. It was not a mere symbol that they sought, a name whereby they might call him. Many do go through life, however, as mere names, colourless and characterless, of whom no one would ask this question with serious intent. But such an one would not be the herald of the Messiah. Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, and men of like mould are not names.
- (b) They wanted to know his claims, and whether he could satisfy them, seeing that his ministry assumed an authority to teach. And the preacher did justify them, not by self-assertion, but by force of character and truth. He was such a man as could not be separated from his message, for his message came out of himself.
- (c) For this reason he was not frightened at the enquiry, nor offended. Nor did he hide himself behind claims of the rabbinic type. His reply was the claim to be a prophet, standing on the sole ground of an immediate call from God, to be proved by personality, the inherent force of truth, and the subsequent testimony to his message from its fulfilment.

II.—Apply to Jesus Christ.

- (a) The same question was asked in many ways of him whom John foretold. He too came without the orthodox testimonials, standing on his own authority and boldly asserting. The lazy answer of conventionalism was that men knew him to be a carpenter. But the answer has never satisfied any one. So to-day men say that he is Christ, or even that he is God, who yet do not ask themselves what they mean by calling him Christ or God.
- (b) And the question remains the abiding question in regard to him. It is not merely that he spoke with authority, but that the self-assertion of his personality is the essence of the answer. “Come unto me.” “I am the way,” etc. “But I say.” “I am he.” “Follow me.”
- (c) It is impossible to dissociate his message from himself, although the attempt is often made. One cannot accept the teaching of Jesus as the highest ethics and ignore himself as the very kernel of all that he taught, himself with his unlimited and imperious appeal to the allegiance of interior loyalty. The most absolute personality demands the most intensely personal following.

III.—Apply to self.

- (a) Consider the question as it was put to the Baptist. Men often take life as they find it, and take themselves for granted. Many men are indeed nothing else than what their condition and circumstances make them; they inherit a moral code and religious ideas, as they inherit family property and social surroundings.
- (b) It requires a stronger religious conviction than the easy acceptance of Christianity which satisfies most people, before the personality is aroused and Christianized in such way as Jesus Christ demanded. It is from lack of this that Christ's presentation of the life of man is so disfigured that he is scarcely recognizable in the modern world as a force.
- (c) Remember, however, that in no age can it be expected that more than a few will attain to such personality as our thoughts have suggested. It would be most unlike Christ to reject as his disciples all who do not attain to the personality of a S. John Baptist or a S. Paul. But for practical reflection consider the relation of these thoughts to conscience; its training and its imperious demands upon obedience.

The Priest as Prophet

THIRD WEDNESDAY IN ADVENT

"A great prophet is risen up among us."—S. Luke vii. 16.

Picture: S. John Baptist as more than a prophet, because he went before, as a messenger, to prepare the way.

Resolve: to make a good use of ember days.

I.—*Christian prophets.*

- (a) The title has passed over into the New Testament, "Apostles and then prophets." Jesus Christ himself is the true prophet (Deut. xviii. 15). The priests of God are to be prophets of the new dispensation in which God has visited his people (S. Luke vii. 16). Christ is to reveal himself in us and through us, so that it is not we who speak but God who speaks through us (S. Matt. x. 20).
- (b) The prophet is pre-eminently he who comes forth from the presence of God to declare his message. Through the prophet God visits his people. It is not merely that what he says is good and true, but that he says it from God. "There was a man sent from God whose name was John" is the way in which the Fourth Gospel introduces that prophet who prepares the way.
- (c) Consider therefore Jesus Christ in his life of fellowship with God in prayer as revealing to us a true aspect of the prophet. In the midst of his life of ministry he is in continual fellowship with God. The interior life lies behind the ministry and is the secret of it (S. Mark i. 33-35). Before each crisis in the unfolding of his ministry, S. Luke tells us that he has had speech with God. The outside world, our own people, our nearest friends, should only see a little of the life of the prophet, whose life of fellowship with God in prayer is to be such that it can be said of him, "Therefore came I forth."

II.—*The interpreters of God's revelation.*

- (a) The modern priest is more often a critic than a prophet. We may be intellectual; we can scarcely be called inspired. We may be more efficient, but we are less sacred. But the mark of the prophet is "The word of the Lord came unto me," "Thus saith the Lord." S. John Baptist called himself a voice.
- (b) The true prophet must through devout meditation have a clear perception of the unity of the divine good will. He must have conviction, and not be merely a searcher after truth if haply he may find it. We have opinions; the prophet knows: we seek after truth; the prophet is held by the truth.
- (c) And so far as we are prophets we must speak from God what he gives us to teach. We must handle the revelation with conviction of its power, trusting it. And as the gift comes to us through "The Father's only supreme prophet of the prophets" (Eusebius), strengthen the conviction that he himself is uniquely the Word of God which cannot be without power.

III.—*The response.*

- (a) It is response, not offer. The vision of Isaiah precedes "Here am I, send me." The great prophet said, "I am not come to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." The will is to be done, and not merely endured; and for that there must be conviction that the will of God is best. (See S. Matt. vii. 15, 21-23.)
- (b) The response is the readiness to do the will at all costs, even to be counted a fool for Christ's sake. A holy foolishness which does not modify the will of God by the nice calculations of a wise precaution, tempering God's truth to the softness and self-indulgence of the age, is much needed by God's prophets (1 Cor. i. 21).
- (c) S. John Baptist was to be called the prophet of the Highest, for he was to prepare the way of the Lord. That preparation was found to be the life of conformity to the will of God by the mystical union of his life with the life of Christ through public preaching, popularity passing into opposition, arrest, the hour of darkness and death. Such is the fellowship of response.

Jesus Christ the Rock of Offence

THIRD THURSDAY IN ADVENT

"And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."—S. Matt. xi. 6.

Picture: Jesus Christ an obstacle to the world.

Resolve: to see the stumbling block and not to be offended.

I.—*The simile.*

- (a) A stone of stumbling is a loose stone lying in the way, against which the traveller strikes his foot; the rock of offence is the native rock rising up through the earth which trips up the traveller and almost makes him fall. In the age of Isaiah the simile would be familiar to any one who had made even a short journey (Isa. viii. 14, 15).
- (b) Had S. John Baptist ever heard the words that Simeon had uttered over the infant Jesus (S. Luke ii. 34)? But at any rate he was familiar with the words of Isaiah, and in his hour of trial the blessed Lord, who refreshed himself by the word of God, encouraged the faith of his servant from the same source. There was to be an advent of God's written word to the Baptist of the desert paths.
- (c) The disciple who took up the words of Isaiah (S. Matt. iii. 3; S. John i. 23), is himself now fed by them (S. Matt. xi. 5). Learn this twofold lesson, and do not stumble. He who delivers the word of God to others must himself be made to realize the message; but if he has delivered it in sincerity and truth he shall be saved from stumbling in the hour of his own trial.

II.—*The use of the simile.*

- (a) In the parable of the sower tribulation or persecution causes the man to stumble on the stony ground (S. Matt. xiii. 20, 21). See xv. 12 and S. John vi. 60, 61. In all these cases they stumble at the word (1 Pet. ii. 8). In the early history of the Church many illustrations of this are to be found in the rejection by the Jews of the revelation to the Gentiles.
- (b) The people were offended in him (S. Matt. xiii. 57), that he who in his Incarnation came in human guise should speak such words of wisdom and do such mighty works. And the disciples likewise were offended when the mystery of the Passion began to unfold itself (S. Matt. xxvi. 31, 33). There are still the stumbling blocks of the Advent and Passion of the Son of God.
- (c) S. Paul has carried on the application: Christ crucified is a stumbling block (1 Cor. i. 23), and he regards the cross as the revelation of offence, which is to be borne by its disciples (Gal. v. 11). The Jewish nation has stumbled at the Messiah (Rom. ix. 31-33; xi. 11); and S. Peter has said that those who do not receive the despised stone as the head of the corner (S. Matt. xxi. 42; Acts iv. 11), but stumble at the word of the psalmist (Ps. cxviii. 22), shall find him a stone of stumbling (1 Pet. ii. 4-8).

III.—*Its application at Advent.*

- (a) One may stumble at the word. It is a greater strain in these days of criticism than it was formerly to accept the verity of the Incarnation. Blessed is he who shall not stumble. Let him strengthen his faith from the written word of God, and especially from that revelation of the living word in the Holy Gospels. To read one's Bible is often of more help than many arguments.
- (b) One may stumble at the humility of the Gospel. It is a stone rejected by the rulers of this world, and those who thus leave it despised on one side will surely stumble over it in their proud search for more intellectual and philosophical satisfaction. Only the meek and humble in spirit can truly fail to be offended in the Son of Man who brings salvation to the sinful, but came not to call the righteous, and who bids us learn of him for he is meek and lowly in heart.
- (c) And one may stumble over the revelation of the cross, with its lesson of fellowship in his defeat by the world, in endurance of the burdens of others, in being despised and rejected of men. Many would be followers of him in his triumph who cannot take up their cross and follow him from Bethlehem to Calvary.

The Priest as Steward

THIRD FRIDAY IN ADVENT

"It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."—1 Cor. iv. 2.

Consider: a priest of God.

Pray: for a much deeper sense among Englishmen of what is required of a priest.

I.—*The steward.*

- (a) He is not his own master. To his master he stands or falls. Woe be to the priest who is satisfied with the world's respect. Nor is he even justified because he knows nothing against himself. There is One that judgeth him. The priest, above all things, is one who must give account.
- (b) We know how the steward who wasted his master's goods was yet commended when he acted "wisely" (S. Luke xvi. 8). It is the same word which is used of the "wise" virgins, and of the man who built his house upon the rock. It is the word which expresses skill or practical wisdom, the adapting of means to the attainment of desired ends; and the word is well applied to the steward who has to distribute the *suitable* portion of food in due season (S. Luke xii. 42).
- (c) It is an insult to Almighty God to think that he will be easily satisfied. We may be quite sure that he demands our best, and will put up with nothing less. And efficiency is many-sided. There is the life itself; there is the equipment; there is the efficiency of sympathy with one's people. A steward has no right to be satisfied unless he is always seeking to qualify himself for his office.

II.—*The householder.*

- (a) The priest may never forget that he is slave to the master of the house. He cannot be content with efficiency and diligence. Every priest is in truth a religious; he has first to surrender *himself* to God in all things. Nothing is his own—time, money, or holidays. His life is his oblation; he may not choose where he will work, or at what, whether at home or abroad, in town or country. He has only the slave's liberty, which is to have his master's protection.
- (b) "Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament" (2 Cor. iii. 5, 6). The Master is entirely cognizant of the steward's inefficiency, and will support him with the full weight of his authority just so long as the slave does not forget his position. In his *Politics*, Aristotle said that the slave is capable of virtue, but it must be produced in him by his master.
- (c) So far as the priest is seen to be the Master's slave his stewardship will be recognized. If the goods which he distributes are not his own, if the household to which he ministers is not his, what right has he to lord it over God's heritage! And, too, if he ministers to his Master's household, what right has he to trim and coax or to make dishonourable terms!

III.—*The stores.*

- (a) He distributes the stores which are his Master's. If ever there is a time when the priest is faint-hearted it is not when he is thinking of them. Mark the boldness of the great steward. "My God shall supply all your need"; "I have all things and abound"; "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." Fitting words from such a steward.
- (b) If the Gospel is worn out, it is first that the priest has worn it out for himself in superficiality of life, through routine of business, and forgetfulness of his relation to his Master; and then that he has worn it out in the use of it, in platitudes and commonplace.
- (c) But the Gospel-stores are still full of power; the Gospel to convict, heal, and nourish. The power of the cross is not less than it was, though a priest may know little about it in his own life, and therefore dare not use it. The Sacraments are not worn out, though the priest may have used them as forms and ceremonies, and therefore is afraid to trust to them. There is the warning of the steward who squandered the master's goods.

A Reed shaken by the Wind

THIRD SATURDAY IN ADVENT

"A reed shaken with the wind?"—S. Matt. xi. 7.

Picture: S. John Baptist standing amidst the reeds of the Jordan.

Resolve: prayer for the spiritual strength of priests.

I.—*S. John Baptist a minister of Jesus Christ.*

- (a) He perplexed the people. He was not as one of them, although he knew their life, and shared its trials and temptations. He had lived in the deserts, who was born in the village home, and he had been prepared for his ministry by a life of simplicity, self-conquest and meditation. He stood now in contrast with the wind-shaken reeds by the Jordan, where he was baptizing.
- (b) And he was no comfortably clad rabbi, loving the long clothes which were respected. Such men are to be found in any age, haunting the houses of ease, and enjoying the social advantages of the respect paid to their dress.
- (c) But a true prophet; no mere semblance of one, known only by his prophet's garment and his girdle. The man fitted his office. There was reality. He had knowledge of God; he could live with him without requiring the relief of society. And he had something from him to deliver, and he had persevered in its delivery. It was now late in his ministry that this testimony was borne to him.

II.—*"A reed shaken with the wind."*

- (a) The reed grows up tall and straight, and looks fair. But its roots and its life are all watery. There is no strength wherein it can excel. There is lack of character, conviction and experience; and no man can lean on such (2 Kings xviii. 21). Nor has a reed any message to deliver to the soldiers or the common people or to Herod. It may decorate a fair drawing-room.
- (b) What passing currents of opinion play upon the reeds! Any light wind of opinion influences them, whether of passing fashion in ceremonial, or in social work, or in theological opinion. And the light winds of fancy may be mistaken for the wind of God: but "Be strong in the Lord." (See Zech. viii. 9-15.)
- (c) The reed does not merely sway backwards and forwards under conciliation to the gentle wafting of local breezes; but it is liable to the influence of sudden gusts, which bend it violently this way or that, but only for a time. Some masterful spirit directs the priest, and his life is not his own. Or he is powerfully impressed for a season by the resolution of his last retreat or of the stimulus of a parochial mission.

III.—*"What went ye out for to see?"*

- (a) The reed provides a sad meditation for the priest of God, who, if he does not feel convicted of weakness, may hear God's voice speaking to him of One who came meek and lowly, and who did not break the bruised reed. But for laymen too the subject is bitter. What do I go out for to see? Consider to how great an extent priests are made by what is expected of them, and how many of them would be better priests if higher things were demanded of them.
- (b) Consider this too in relation to the preparation for the priesthood. Little consideration is given to the training of a priest in the divine science, and English Churchmen are not often prepared to contribute to a better training. Hence well-meaning priests teach crudely a divine science of life which they have never understood, and when they are opposed, loyalty to what they seem to understand bids them refuse to submit. One has gone out expecting to see a reed.
- (c) Or the clergy are kindly treated out of respect to religion, but are not expected to be priests. John Baptist kept to his Jordan banks, and was not found in kings' houses, except when he went to rebuke. Use influence to make people treat the clergy as men with spiritual concerns, and they will not prove in many cases to be reeds of Egypt.

Joy

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

"Rejoice in the Lord always."—Phil. iv. 4.

Consider: the joy of the holy Mother.

Resolve: to follow in the way of spiritual joy.

I.—*A preparation for Christmas.*

- (a) We think first of the joy to be mother of her Lord. The joy of motherhood is not for words: it is known only to mothers. But here is a mother's joy which was never to be chilled by the careless indifference or by the disappointed hopes of the grown son; only to be deepened and disciplined by the trials and sorrows and difficult experiences of the life which unfolded itself in the Man of sorrows bearing the sins of the world.
- (b) "Mother and Son" does not exhaust this joy. We must add "Woman and Saviour"; a history of spiritual fellowship. His devotion to the Father's will, which took him away from the home life, could not quench the joy of her who had experienced that her spirit had rejoiced in God her Saviour. Nor could the Crucifixion or Ascension close the joy of Mary while she remained on earth, for she had learned the greater joy.
- (c) At first sight it may be thought that S. Paul is bidding the Philippians rejoice in the prospect of the second Advent. And this is so, albeit a very inadequate apprehension of his words. "The Lord is at hand" was a watchword of the Christians because they realized so intensely that he had come, and had come into their lives, and was ever with them, that they did not think of him as absent but rather as just unseen, and about to manifest himself.

II.—*A Pauline study of joy.*

- (a) So we think of the joy of Christmas as realized in our own experience of Jesus Christ as "at hand"; our joy in him as known, adored and obeyed. We joy over the manger because there is the mystery of our secret fellowship with him, his intimate understanding of us, his gifts of fellowship, strength and grace.
- (b) But there are conditions of joy; and how is this joy to be entered into? S. Paul seems to suggest "moderation" as a necessary condition; and indeed it is true that any self-indulgence is a finding satisfaction in a lower joy than the joy of the Lord; and hence the value of detachment, especially from self. But S. Paul's word is suggestive rather of the imitation of Christ, for he uses the word "fearance" or "gentleness" (Phil. iv. 5, R.V. marg.) which is characteristic of him (2 Cor. x. 1). Joy in Christ cannot be selfish; it must be the experience of following in his steps.
- (c) Again, fellowship with the Lord, which anticipates the coming of Advent, is realized in that joy which elevates life above self-assertion, the spirit of rivalry and pettiness of disposition.

III.—*Joy versus anxiety.*

- (a) He continues his study of the joy of fellowship with Christ. There are many spheres of anxiety (ver. 6, R.V.) apart from self-assertion, and anxiety robs us of joy. So S. Paul applies his Christmas revelation again. Joy is fellowship in that which satisfies, and the highest joy is personal. Use that fellowship with him for the relief of all these anxieties. He can relieve you; and, too, it is not fellowship if you hide them from him.
- (b) There cannot be Christian joy without prayer or supplication. We are lacking in joy because we do not believe in prayer, do not use it. And the prayer of fellowship will encourage to thanksgiving. Do not forget the thanksgiving; it will bring out the experience of joy.
- (c) Now see how the Pauline study of joy is complete. Fellowship with Jesus Christ, realized in self-forgetfulness, and used in all emergency of anxiety, finds expression in prayer and thanksgiving, so that the peace of God, surpassing all anxiety and self-sensitiveness, keeps guard over the heart. Is not this truly an experience of joy in Christ Jesus?

Preparation for Christ

FOURTH MONDAY IN ADVENT

"To make ready a people prepared for the Lord."—S. Luke i. 17.

Consider: the mission of Judaism and its culmination.

Pray: for a right use of Advent.

I.—*The need of preparation.*

- (a) The Incarnation came at the end of the days. The best always needs a very careful preparation before it can be received. Consider, therefore, how the individual life also needs preparation for the gospel, and hence the great importance of a Christian education.
- (b) Consider, further, that sin does not make a preparation for the gospel. Yet many, who recognize that the conversion of the heart is indeed a preparation for the reception of the gospel, are strangely wrong in supposing that this is the whole preparation, and forgetful that it is only a beginning. The converted heart is but a preparedness for beginning the work of grace.
- (c) Herein, too, lies a great problem of foreign missions. Great wisdom and grace are required by missionaries to prepare the way of the Lord. There must be John Baptists as well as Pauls. Ought not I, whose heart God is further preparing this Advent, to pray more zealously for missionaries?

II.—*The chosen people.*

- (a) Why they, rather than the whole world? But God was preparing the whole world. Yet there was a special preparation of one people, chosen in his wisdom on behalf of the world. At least I may consider that he did choose and prepare; the human race did not progress by self-development into making itself ready.
- (b) And by the choice of a nation rather than by a series of individuals from various nations, we may see a divine purpose of education in the conditions of social life, and a revelation of national vocation. This may help to modify the undue individualism which we have imported into the gospel.
- (c) The Jewish nation seems to us unsuitable material in many ways. We despise the orientals. And certainly their history often reads like a refusal to be educated. We may put restraint on this criticism of God if we will make ourselves think of the Psalter and of the writings of the prophets.

III.—*The preparation.*

- (a) Almighty God chooses what best serves his purposes. Perhaps we do not see his purposes clearly, when we venture to criticize. However many and grievous were the failures of Judaism, it always had the strong impress of religion. The English nation may or may not in some ways be better than the Jewish—and certainly it ought to be better—but as a nation, in spite of our Christianity, we do not view life as a whole in the light of God as did the Jewish nation.
- (b) But was their preparation a failure? The prepared could never be a whole nation. And, first, the fullest issue of Judaism is the Blessed Mother. Was it failure to be the nation of which the second Eve was to be a daughter? That is not failure which is the condition of the best.
- (c) Secondly, no reader of the Acts and epistles should fail to see the place of Judaism at the foundation of all Christian utterance, or to reflect that the Old Testament is the earliest Christian Bible, and that the evangelistic work of the first generation was built upon the moral and spiritual soil of Jewish character. Again, the first preachers of the gospel were all Jews. Is not S. Paul alone almost a conclusive reply to a criticism upon Judaism as a preparation for Christianity?

Restlessness

FOURTH TUESDAY IN ADVENT

"Why art thou so heavy, O my soul? And why art thou so disquieted within me? O put thy trust in God; for I will yet give him thanks, which is the help of my countenance and my God."—Ps. xlii. 6, 7, 14, 15; xliii. 5, 6, P.B.V.

Picture: a devout Jew in the land of exile beyond Jordan, casting his eyes towards the sanctuary in Jerusalem.

Resolve: to seek rest by trusting in God.

I.—*The restlessness of sin.*

- (a) A law of disharmony: "There is no peace for the wicked." The soul is meant for God; sin is an irritant to its nature. Think too of the feverish restlessness of Satan, going up and down the world, seeking whom he may devour.
- (b) The condition of the world, due to its temporary and therefore changeable character. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," is not restricted to persecution. And, further, the world is largely under the influence of Satan's restlessness.
- (c) A divine providence. An illustration of God's merciful use of the disorder of sin. He would draw us thereby to himself. "Why art thou so heavy?" may be rendered "Why dost thou bow thyself down?" It is the spirit of dejection. "Why art thou so disquieted?" is "Why art thou tossed and agitated like an angry sea?" By dejection and disturbance God calls.

II.—*Restlessness as a temptation.*

- (a) A deception of Satan to upset the soul. "All anxious self-searching is hurtful to peace. . . . Do not deceive yourself into the belief that such disquiet is humility. A really humble spirit accepts its faults with patience, and goes on afresh in confidence and hope." (Grou, *The Hidden Life of the Soul*.)
- (b) Refuse to be always looking within. There is no consolation to be had from variable feelings. But "when we are restless, God remains serene and calm. . . . What God is in himself, not what we may chance to feel him in this or that moment to be, that is our hope." (F. W. Robertson.)
- (c) This temptation is to be resisted by perseverance. Satan's purpose is discouragement; therefore pay no heed: you do not serve God for the sake of peace. And counteract the discouragement by renewing faith in God: "O put thy trust in God."

III.—*The divine rest of the soul.*

- (a) The unchangeable rest of God. Not the rest of inactivity, but of perfection and harmony. Rest is the attainment of satisfaction; God has no unsatisfied desire.
- (b) Partial rest there may be for us, with spiritual progress—the rest of conquered sin. A foretaste indeed there should be if we put our trust in God, looking off from dejection and disquiet. Let your soul be silent upon God (see Ps. lxii. 1, marg.). "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him" (Ps. xxxvii. 7).
- (c) The true rest of the soul is future. "There remaineth a rest." It is the true "entering into his rest" (Heb. iv. 1), the satisfaction of all desires. "I shall be satisfied with thy likeness, when I awake" (Ps. xvii. 15).

Freedom from Anxiety

FOURTH WEDNESDAY IN ADVENT

"Be careful for nothing."—Phil. iv. 6.

Picture: S. Paul's first arrival at a new centre of evangelization.

Resolve: to realize that Christ is always at hand.

I.—*S. Paul and the Second Advent.*

- (a) The contrast in date between 1 Thess. and Philippians makes his language in the early epistle easy to be understood (1 Thess. iv. 15-17), but emphasizes the thought of the Advent here. "The Lord is at hand; be careful for nothing." For already we have evidence that the apostle had realized that he would probably not be among those who "are alive and remain unto the coming" (2 Cor. v. 8; Phil. i. 20).
- (b) A real grasp of the coming again is to be had only through a clear realization of the presence of Christ with his people to-day. If only I can be assured that he is himself about my path, if only I can have his presence with me throughout the days of my life, then I shall know that he is to come, and is at hand even now and at the door.
- (c) Apart from this fellowship, one has only vague impressions of the future, and generally of a very impersonal character. With S. Paul the future was exceedingly personal; not merely an event, a change, but the manifestation of a Person. This gave to his belief in the Second Advent a great vitality: it was not a mere crisis of change, but an expectation and a hope.

II.—*"In nothing be anxious"* (R.V.).

- (a) A strong belief in the personal Advent gives great confidence now. He has not left the world; he is preparing it for his coming. Trust him. He has already come into the heart of his disciple and abides there, and the disciple is assured that all things are working together according to his purpose, for a new fulness of time when he shall be revealed.
- (b) It is indicative of our slowness of faith that although Jesus Christ himself has bidden us be without anxiety (S. Matt. vi. 25 ff.), and S. Paul has repeated his lesson, and S. Peter also (1 Peter v. 7), Christians should find this of all things the most difficult. Make confession of this to God, and pray for increase of faith.
- (c) How can one fail to be anxious, in view of so tremendous a future, unless one realizes that he is at hand? When he was asleep in the boat and the storm arose, they awoke him with the cry, "Master, we perish." Rather than comment on their lack of faith, commend their faith by comparison with our own; for we continue fearful, and do not waken him asleep in our hearts to keep us from danger.

III.—*"In everything."*

- (a) Consider at this season that Jesus Christ has come into our life of human experience. We are not now to keep the fellowship of God for some rarely approachable glory in the hiddenness of the Holy of Holies. He has in the Incarnation removed the veil, and entered into the smallest concerns of our life. Use him in everything.
- (b) S. Paul was writing to the Christians with whom he was most intimate. He tells them a little of the secret of his own power, how he could do all things through Christ, and how God would supply all their needs (iv. 13, 19). It was by making use of prayer in everything, and not merely in great matters or in matters which we rigidly mark off as spiritual.
- (c) But this freedom from anxiety requires an ingredient to be mixed with prayer. There must be thanksgiving. The prayer is not to be querulous and complaining, but to be the confidence and joy of one who knows that he is at hand, has come in the flesh, and has already many a time turned darkness into light.

Receiving Christ

FOURTH THURSDAY IN ADVENT

"He came unto his own."—S. John i. 11.

Picture: Jesus Christ's birth into the world and among men.

Resolve: to receive him this Advent yet more heartily.

I.—"Unto his own."

- (a) Strictly, "he came unto his own (home), and they that were his own received him not." Contrast ver. 10: "He was in the world . . . and the world knew him not." He was already in the world, upholding it by the word of his power; but in the Incarnation he *came* personally, and it was to his own land of Judæa that he came, which by the history of the chosen people had been prepared for him, and they did not *receive* him.
- (b) We may give the words a more general application. In the Incarnation he came to his own world, created through him, maintained in him, proceeding to him as its goal. The divine Word is at home in the world. Consider, therefore, that the world of nature is in sympathy with the Christian, if he will approach it in the spirit of Christ.
- (c) And he came in the Incarnation to his own home of human life, even becoming man so much was mankind his own home. Consider, therefore, how he understands man, and his relation to fellow-men, and the conditions of his life in the world, and his relation to the world of nature.

II.—*The manner of the Incarnation.*

- (a) He came unexpectedly. Prophets and teachers had foretold his coming, and he came in harmony with their Messianic foreshadowings. Yet he necessarily came unexpectedly, because the understanding of man could not grasp by anticipation that coming which must be greater than any exposition of it. Yet we, who have had this lesson, criticize to-day his revelation whereinsoever it is above our grasp.
- (b) And he was unrecognized. "His own received him not," because they were not spiritually ready for him. It is often said that if Christ came again we should similarly fail to recognize him, and should reject him. It seems as if this is so, thus far are we from understanding him even yet, and to so slight a degree is our conception of life Christianized.
- (c) He had to educate men to receive him. Slowly he trained a few until at length they knew that he was the Christ. They did not discover him for themselves, or recognize him; but he formed them. Thus too must I learn Christ by growing up into him in all things.

III.—*The Person incarnate.*

- (a) It is presumptuous to decide whether God must have done this or that; that he has done so is enough for us. Reverently, and therefore humbly, we must ponder upon what he has done, sure that it is infinite wisdom and love. Thus we may see a unique fitness in the Incarnation of the Logos through whom the world of things and of man was made, and unto whom they have been made.
- (b) It is the revelation—so far as we can see—of God's uttermost for man. He is the direct revelation of God in terms of human life. And yet further, he is the revelation of God in absolute terms of love, revealing therefore the heart of God in language which we can understand (see Heb. i. 1; S. John iii. 16).
- (c) He is man's goal. To study Christ in human life is to interpret my own life which is to be; to follow Christ in daily life by the power of Christ in me is to unfold my life according to the will of God. He became like unto me that he might make me like unto himself.

Self-examination

FOURTH FRIDAY IN ADVENT

"Where art thou?"—Gen. iii. 9.

Picture: the voice of God speaking in the garden of the soul.

Resolve: a serious preparation for Christmas.

I.—Ask it of self.

- (a) Conceive of Almighty God asking this question as of old in the story of Eve. At any rate, his voice is the guarantee of his presence. It cannot be without hope where his voice penetrates. Even if one must leave some cherished Eden, punishment will be tempered by hope—the seed of the woman. There is no need of despair so long as conscience speaks.
- (b) But perhaps it is not that one has hidden in fear. The voice of God is calling, as it has often called before. Does it convey any impression? A surprise? for his voice has not been heard very clearly of late. A shock? when one would rather not have heard his voice just now, when one was wanting not to think too much of him. A fear? because somehow he is associated in one's mind with rebuke and refusal. All this betokens a certain foreignness with him.
- (c) But perhaps one has been listening for the enquiry, waiting in the garden where he loves to visit, and where one has so often heard his voice of encouragement. "Where art thou?" "Here, Lord, where thou hast met me before, healed me, and put me on my feet. I was seeking thee, waiting for thy voice."

II.—Ask it in self-examination.

- (a) I am in the midst of the congregation. Am I consciously living there, or only taking it easily for granted, while I am most concerned as to my position in the society of human estimation and rank? Where truly is myself? I will put myself before the tribunal of conscience, and ask myself closely.
- (b) This too is certain, that I am in the midst of foes and dangers. How often and how clearly do I recognize this and call out to my God, "Where art thou?" Or do I seem to fear them less than before, and to be more independent, not needing to call upon God, that his nearness may put all else to flight?
- (c) Ask it in relation to him. Am I nearer to him than a year ago? or have I been going a little away from him? Has the experience of a year brought me nearer? Am I as often close to him in communion, in prayer, in heart? Or is it as it is sometimes in married life, that while living very close, and refusing to recognize the possibility of anything else, one has really got a little further away, from taking it too much for granted, without exercise, without proper response?

III.—Ask it of Almighty God.

- (a) How varied is the question, asked by most men at least several times in their lives! Asked sometimes in defiance or blasphemy even, often in blind enquiry or the agony of an experience which seems to be a denial of God. Or in sheer perplexity at the bewildering suggestions of transcendence and immanence, or the not less perplexing variety of religious solutions.
- (b) But asked too in the variety of religious experience, which knows him in the inner depths of the heart, and too that he is far above out of sight, defying his enemies while he overrules all according to his will: known here, and yet lost just now in the wave of some uncharitable suspicion unfairly harboured: to be realized in charity, and lost in selfishness.
- (c) And this, as we can read it, is the question that he answers at Christmas. Here, in your midst, in your life, by One made like unto you, in humanity and its true fellowship, in all the experiences of life, as it has been manifested by the One who did the will of God, and found life the opportunity of this.

What doest Thou here?

FOURTH SATURDAY IN ADVENT

"What doest thou here?"—1 Kings xix. 9, 13.

Picture: Elijah standing at the mouth of the cave when the voice came to him.

Resolve: to prepare my heart for Jesus Christ this Christmastide by acts of loving devotion.

I.—*Consider Elijah wearied and disappointed after great spiritual strain.*

- (a) He was weary. So too was One greater than Elijah when he sat *thus* by the well (S. John iv. 6), and when he fell asleep in the boat, and often after he had spent whole nights in prayer to God. As with Elijah, so with us, his gentle spirit maketh allowance, for he is touched with the feeling of our infirmity.
- (b) He was disappointed. After a great effort what was the result? The anger of Jezobel was only the lighter part of it; he was disappointed with himself; "I am not better than my fathers"; "I only am left." Beware of the impressions of depressed introspection, and correct them by the judgments of brighter times. Spiritual exertion exhausts; it does not feed. That is one reason why the man of God needs so much devotional time, or to make so much use of the time he has.
- (c) He was exhausted by physical fatigue. At such times there is need of much watchfulness against depression and temptation. Still more is spiritual strain, such as Elijah had experienced, a trial to the character. Learn from Almighty God's care of Elijah to have a greater confidence in him.

II.—*"What doest thou here?"*

(Make acts of self-abasement: Who am I that I should draw a parallel between myself and Elijah? Rather, I should apply the words to myself differently.)

- (a) The purpose of life. What am I doing here in this world of God's? For what am I sent into it? Am I doing anything which will endure testing by fire? Or am I wasting life, purposelessly or even deliberately?
- (b) What am I doing *here*? Pray that God may shout the words into the conscience if ever I am in a place, among companions, inappropriate to a Christian, or where I am ashamed of Christ, and afraid to speak as a Christian. Men recognized Elijah as a man of God (2 Kings i. 9). Here, among my own people, dare I believe that I am recognized as one?
- (c) Am I doing all that I should do? Let God investigate; let him overhaul the use of time, the recreations, the many opportunities of service. When God had refreshed and rested Elijah, without any rebuke of his complaining, he sent him to further work. Do I wear myself out in the divine service? or if I am prevented from active service do I fulfil the service of intercession uncomplainingly?

III.—*Apply the words devotionally.*

- (a) At the Holy Sacrifice. What doest thou here? I am come into the Presence of God to receive him, etc. Or, I am here to worship him in his holy congregation, to adore the Lamb slain, to thank him for his precious Blood, etc. (make acts of recollection, reparation, intention, etc.). Ask the question of Christ. What doest *thou* here? "My child, I am offering myself for your sins and for the sins of the world"; "I am here to give myself to you for the strengthening of your life, to feed and refresh you as I did my servant Elijah."
- (b) To Christ in the heart. "I too am weary, my child; the world rejects me to-day in indifference, even as it found no room for me in the inn. Give me rest in your heart; I will not disturb you, but I will guide your heart into peace even while I rest there." Truly "we which have believed do enter into that rest" (Heb. iv. 3).
- (c) To Jesus Christ coming into the world. "What doest *thou* here? The world is no place for thee, Lord; heaven alone is fit for thee." "Yea; the world is my place; through me it was made. Heaven yearns for the sons of men, and I come for my own in whatever way I may win them; by making myself one with them, through death if that be the way." "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. The world cannot do without thee." "Have patience, my child; I am come. I am ever coming. Again I do come. Yet even now are there seven thousand" (1 Kings xix. 18). Hide thyself in me, and thou wilt know my Advent in "the sound of gentle tillness" (1 Kings xix. 12, R.V. marg.).

Ⓞ Sapientia!

DECEMBER 16

"O Wisdom which comest forth out of the mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end to the other, mightily and sweetly ordering all things; come and teach us the way of prudence."

Picture: The great church of S. Sophia (Holy Wisdom) in Constantinople is now a mosque. One day Wisdom will be justified of her works.

Praise God for his wisdom in ordering all things according to his will.

I.—*The wisdom of God.*

- (a) First appreciated in the dark days preceding the fall of Jerusalem, as the assurance that beneath the wreckage of her history Almighty God was directing his purposes for Israel. It strengthened the prophets, and led to the doctrine of the remnant, and to the encouragement of a restoration out of natural discipline.
- (b) In later Jewish writings, influenced by Greek thought, this doctrine developed in various ways. Sometimes it was an attribute of God, at others it was separable from him, a first-born onlooker and appreciator of creation. Various were the attempts to enrich the moral conceptions of Israel by the broader intellectual problems of the outer world.
- (c) In the New Testament is a similar indefiniteness. With S. Luke it is a paraphrase for God in his wisdom (vii. 35; xi. 49): S. Paul admires the divine wisdom which pursues its course in a manner not to be traced, and which singly and unaided moves towards its end (Rom. xi. 33 ff.). But to the Corinthians he presents the Incarnate Christ as the expression of the divine wisdom (1 Cor. i. 24, etc.).

II.—*O Sapientia!*

- (a) The first of the great Os, which give the intention to the Magnificat, as the hymn of the Incarnation, presents the conception of the Word as the eternal Wisdom, the solution of all history and revelation. It bids us interpret all life in terms of the Incarnation, and read all pre-Christian history as preparatory to it, and all subsequent history as its unfolding through conflict in the path of victory.
- (b) The antiphon therefore claims Jesus Christ as the interpretation of the mind of God. Give time to unfold this in many relationships as you read the holy Gospels, and with S. Paul ponder the wisdom of redemption. In the Magnificat, the centre of the daily morning and evening offices, adore the truth of the Incarnation, renew faith in Christ, and offer life's devotion to it.
- (c) Wisdom is not to be identified with knowledge or sagacity. In symbolic language S. Paul describes the divine knowledge as an inexhaustible depth, and his wisdom as his pathway through the deeps. Wisdom is the character which applies knowledge: but it is sagacity and not wisdom unless the application be on abiding principles and not in temporary policy. The true and the right are alone the wise.

III.—*"Come and teach us the way of prudence."*

- (a) Think of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Gospels, of whom it is said that he was filled with wisdom and advanced in it (S. Luke ii. 40, 52): of whom the people said, "Whence hath this man this wisdom?" (S. Matt. xiii. 54). From this go on to consider him as the greater Solomon (S. Matt. xii. 42).
- (b) Then consider him who sweetly ordereth all things (Wisdom viii. 1 and antiphon), in contrast with Solomon whose gift of wisdom was marred by his character. Study him in fellowship with and dependence upon his Father, and in his patient and reverent dealings with men. By contrast consider the moral defects of many who are called wise, their self-assertion, combativeness, and inconsideration of others.
- (c) "Come and teach us the way of prudence." The wise of old rightly perceived the gift of wisdom to be the fear of the Lord (Job xxviii. 28; Ps. cxi. 10). In the light of the antiphon face the application of these thoughts to the perplexities of the world, the Church, and the individual, in the guiding of life by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ. (See S. Luke xxi. 15.)

○ Adonai!

DECEMBER 17

"O Adonai, and Leader of the house of Israel, who appearedst unto Moses in a flame of fire in the bush, and gavest him the law on Sinai; come and redeem us with an outstretched arm."

Picture: the burning lamp (Gen. xv. 17), the burning bush, the lightning flashes of Sinai, and the pillar of fire in the wilderness.

Praise God for his revelation of holiness.

I.—Consider the continuity of revelation.

- (a) How slow, how many-sided, is the gradual progress to the Incarnation! The radii seem infinite and disconnected as one sees them from the circumference; but at the centre they point harmoniously. Such unity of purpose through history supports our conviction in a brilliant consummation to the Incarnation (see Rom. viii. 21; xi. 32).
- (b) Looking at the old world, from our vantage ground, we mark the conscious and unconscious looking forward to the Incarnation, and thus obtain a great stimulus to our conviction of the world's present yearning after Christ. Present Christ boldly to a world searching after him in the dark: present the world boldly to a Christ, who is its solution, who came to gather into one the scattered fragments of creation.
- (c) The antiphon greets Christ as Adonai. The oneness of the voice of God in revelation throughout the ages is a difficult conception: it is always more easy to contrast dispensations than to realize their interior unity. But the rock which followed the fathers in the wilderness was Christ, and the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. We must boldly apply Christianity to each age, going out with Christ to the regeneration of society, to solve each new-rising problem.

II.—Moses at the burning bush and at Sinai.

- (a) Adonai carries back to Abram (Gen. xv. 2) and the choice of a people; to the rise of personal religion and its realization in a Church. Learn at Advent to appreciate the mystery of the Church as the unfolding of Christ to us, the Adonai who has said that in Abraham shall all the nations of the world be blessed; and gather therefrom a wider idea of the office of the Church.
- (b) Such thoughts lead to the realization of development as a factor in the life of the Church: God is working out his purposes; Adonai, who called us in Abraham, appears now in the burning bush, manifesting his covenant relationship with his people by an active ordering of events.
- (c) That which Adonai foreshadowed in Jewish history directs us to the right interpretation of our own revelation. The covenant relationship, unfolded by the course of history, is conditioned by the law of righteousness. On Sinai he declared himself in awful and unmistakable testimony. This revelation of Adonai cannot be modified.

III.—"O Adonai, come and redeem us."

- (a) Of Abraham he said that he rejoiced to see his day. Across the ages he, who believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness, grasps hands with us in vital religion. To him the same Word of God spake as to us and to our Christian forefathers. Not by servile reproduction of a past age is loyalty to the Incarnation preserved, but by unity of spirit.
- (b) In the burning bush Christian devotion has always seen the human nature of Jesus Christ unconsumed by the fire of divinity, and kindred truths. The ground is holy; but in Advent consider that quickening of human nature whereby the Church walks not after the letter but after the spirit.
- (c) In this respect the Church ever prays to be delivered by the outstretched arm of Adonai, even by him who fulfilled the law in his life of teaching, illuminating the letter by the divine fire of the spirit, raising its standard. "It was said to them of old time, but I say unto you."

○ Radix Jesse!

DECEMBER 18

"O Root of Jesse, who standest for an ensign of the people, at whom kings shall shut their mouths, unto whom the Gentiles shall pray; come and deliver us and tarry not."

Picture: David the ideal king throughout Judaism: the greater David the ideal king throughout Christendom.

Praise God for his guidance in life.

I.—*The fulfiller of ideals.*

- (a) The Messiah, as the desire of all nations, must satisfy the aspirations of national character, and interpret and unfold their history. The history of the Jews is only the most emphatic case of the divine purpose unfolding itself: from it one may see what is true of other nations. The one God has not set the Jews against the nations, but as the climax through which they are to be blest.
- (b) The natural aspirations of the Jews gathered round the family of David; poet and prophet wove the web. The line of David carried on the monarchy to its close, greatly curtailed in extent and dignity; the restored independence of the nation was to be accomplished by the revival of the royal line.
- (c) Thus the antiphon^d turns our eyes to consider him as gathering up into one the scattered elements of the world's aspirations, the Uniter of its tendencies, who satisfies the desires of mankind, and provides the solution of the true significance of national life and of the unity of mankind.

II.—*The root of Jesse and ensign of the people.*

- (a) The symbolism dates at least from the days of Hezekiah and Isaiah, and the fall of the empire threatened by the dominance of Assyria. Prophecy foresees, through faith in Adonai, that the latter nation must disappear, while Judah will shoot forth a branch from the living root of the cut-down stem. Kingdoms may rise and wane.
- (b) It is the stretching out of prophecy towards the realization of the Messianic Kingdom, appreciated in those days through the doctrine of the remnant. It is also the history of the spread of Christianity. If the Church, however, is become the true Israel, consider if there be not here too a doctrine of the remnant, and the possibility too of a new exile and dispersion with yet another call of the Gentiles. "Take heed lest ye fall" is good warning from any Christian branch.
- (c) The new sprig was the sign of returning life, and was to become an ensign gathering together Israel from all its scattered points. The Church of God awakening to the manifestation of spiritual life and power is to be raised out of lethargy and gather round it her scattered sons.

III.—*A new Kingship.*

- (a) The Christian unifies the scattered promises of the Old Testament. Thus the King of Jesse's line is identified with the suffering Messiah of whom Isaiah had said that his suffering shall be shown to be his wisdom, when it issues in glory. A profitable aspect under which to consider the Royal Passion. Kings may indeed shut their mouths at this new power, and new ideal, of royalty. "Art thou the King of the Jews?"
- (b) The heathen nations, recognizing the truth and superiority shall come like strings of captives and fall down before him and make supplications to be received as worshippers. The Incarnation, the realization that "God is with thee" (Isa. xlv. 14), draws first the Eastern kings, as a firstfruits of the rich harvest.
- (c) Consider how bold a sweep the Church in past ages had faith to take, as manifested in these antiphons of the Incarnation, while we now cramp ourselves into the narrow limits of our selfishness and individualism. They saw in it Wisdom justified of her works, the continuity of revelation, the new kingship. Christendom is indeed even now fitfully striving to approximate to the Christian ideal of national government.

⦿ Clavis David!

DECEMBER 19

"O Key of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel, who openest and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth; come and bring him that is bound out of the prison-house, who sitteth in darkness and in the shadow of death."

! Picture: two similes; the steward's key, and the prison-keeper's key.

Praise God for his revelation of grace.

I.—*The key.*

- (a) During the siege of Ashdod Isaiah declared the removal of Shebna, who was perhaps an Egyptian partizan, from the royal stewardship, because he abused the ministration of his offices. A faithful steward would be found in Eliakim, who would be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Isa. xxii. 15 ff.).
- (b) In the Incarnation the great Father has provided a faithful and wise steward to minister his sacraments of grace. The apostle contrasts him with Moses the faithful servant (Heb. iii. 1 ff.). The steward is now the Son himself, who dispenses the Father's bounty. The Incarnation is thus presented both in its bounty, and its character of the final revelation. The heavenly treasure-house will still produce things new as well as old, but the Son as over God's house has an authority to dispense which is not limited as a servant's.
- (c) S. John applies the key of David in another direction. In the general summary the Son of Man has the keys of death and of Hades (Apoc. i. 18), and in the particular application he opens the way of life and fruitful opportunity to the faithful Philadelphian Church, as also he has power to shut up the open door of the Church's opportunity (Apoc. iii. 7, 8). It is this power which in a modified degree he has commissioned to his Church (S. Matt. xvi. 19; S. John xx. 23).

III.—*The symbolism of the steward.*

- (a) Isaiah sees his dignity: "he shall be for a throne of glory to his father's house; and they shall hang on him all the glory of his father's house" (Isa. xxii. 23, 24). So the Incarnate Son says, "All authority has been given unto me in heaven and on earth," and commissioning his apostles he says, "Go ye therefore" (S. Matt. xxviii. 18, 19).
- (b) Isaiah marks also the responsibility of the steward by the symbolism of the key borne on the shoulder (xxii. 22), and he says of the Son that the government shall be upon his shoulder (ix. 6). Think how this shoulder is where he carries the sheep which he has found; also that all the responsibility in the Church is his; and woe to him who presumes to act without his commission or beyond it! In anxious times consider where the responsibility is, and take courage.
- (c) But when he thinks of the liberality of his dispensation he pictures the government as "in his hand" (xxii. 21). The Advent antiphon bids us consider his dispensation of the Church as the store-house of grace and truth bountifully distributed to all.

III.—*The prison-keeper's key.*

- (a) The key of the steward passes over to that of the key which unlocks the prison door. This is presented first as the sceptre (Gen. xlix. 10; Num. xxiv. 17), and then under the symbolism of the key. The Davidic king sets free the prisoners (Isa. xlii. 7).
- (b) Regard therefore the root of Jesse as the restorer of Israel, who delivers from darkness and the cramping limitation of the prison, and brings into the glorious liberty and full light of the gospel. The steward nourishes the prisoners he has himself set free.
- (c) The same key has power to unlock the gates of death and Hades, to set free the prisoners of hope when he preached in the nether world, to deliver souls bound in the prison-house of sin. Finally to fling open the gate of physical death, as even now he has robbed the passage of all its terrors.

☉ Oriens!

DECEMBER 20

"O Dayspring from on high, Brightness of Eternal Light, Sun of righteousness; come thou and shine in upon them that are sitting in the darkness and in the shadow of death."

Picture: the dawn of day.

Praise God for the illumination of the Incarnation.

I.—*The simile.*

- (a) In the East the sunrise is a familiar illustration, coming quickly and with great beauty upon the darkness. Far back in history the sun was the subject of myth; in Jewish prophecy its rising was very naturally used of the dawn of the Messianic age. Our Lord adopted the simile, especially in relation to John Baptist, the morning star whose bright light announces the coming day at some periods of the year.
- (b) A simile so rich in suggestion has of course become a household phrase among Christians. S. Paul made frequent use of it; in Christ we enter into the light out of the darkness of sin. In modern hymnody one recalls at once Wesley and Keble, "Christ, whose glory fills the sky," and "Sun of my soul."
- (c) Among the great *Ō's* this antiphon presents the Incarnation as a theme of praise by reason of its illumination. The underlying passage is Isa. ix. 1, 2: with it are placed the words of Malachi (iv. 2), and the phrasing is influenced by the song of Zachariah (S. Luke i. 78). Praise God for this light upon life and through death, upon moral, intellectual and spiritual darkness.

II.—*Christ the Illuminator.*

- (a) A world revolutionized by the revelation of Jesus Christ, even where it does not acknowledge him, is not fully able to appreciate the darkness on which he shined. It was not only that it was a shame for Christians to speak even of the things which the heathen did in secret, but that the heathen world lacked the revelation which makes human life sacred and pure.
- (b) We may admire the philosophy of the old world, and the more surely shall we perceive its uselessness as a guide and satisfaction of life. No one knew whether we were part of the gods, or if they stood outside us and indifferent. They were a matter of speculation: Jesus Christ has revealed the Father, and raised life to a conscious fellowship with God.
- (c) Sin has taken a new meaning at once deeper and more hopeful through the person of the Saviour; death has been made brighter through the entrance of the Christian hope, or yet more terrible; life and its problems have been gloriously illuminated, and existence changed into a probation for a fuller individuality of joy and expansion.

III.—*The illumination of the individual.*

- (a) That by the Incarnation individual human life has been raised immeasurably in worth is a commonplace; but to reflect upon this helps one's preparation for Christmas. Consider at the same time that Christ's entry into the human heart, with his revelation of forgiveness, and his conversion of the heart into the will to forgive, has brought into common life a beauty which was lacking to the most elevated type of heathen character.
- (b) And his presence in the heart illuminates the daily experience by a grand enlargement of the sphere of duty and responsibility, as he shows the path along which one aspires to walk, and purges the will from selfishness, and enlightens the conscience.
- (c) And likewise he cheers the daily round by his brightness, redeeming life from a monotonous routine, and converting it into a blessed fellowship in which all experiences are stages in the unfolding of his manifestation, to be realized by growth in peace and joy.

☉ Rex Gentium!

DECEMBER 21

"O king of the Gentiles, God of Israel and his Saviour, chief Corner-stone, which maketh both one; come thou, and save thy creatures, whom thou didst fashion from the dust of the earth."

Picture: the great corner-stones which hold all the building together were regarded by the Orientals as more important than the foundations.

Praise God for the unity of life realized in Jesus Christ.

I.—*The corner-stone.*

- (a) The simile widely used in O.T. The corner-stone gives stability. Thus the heads of a tribe were its corner-stones (Numb. xxiv. 17, "corners of Moab"), in whom the scattered portions adhere and find their unity of life.
- (b) More particularly there is a line of Messianic study in Isa. xxviii. 16; Zech. x. 4; Ps. cxviii. 22; and our Lord has appropriated the prophecy to himself (S. Matt. xxi. 42). S. Peter used the simile both early (Acts iv. 11) and late (1 Pet. ii. 7); and S. Paul also (Eph. ii. 20). The new temple which is being builded has the Christ for its corner stone in whom the whole subsists.
- (c) He is indeed the essential unity of scattered humanity and of divided life and of unharmonized thought. The accomplishment of this unity is the goal of the Incarnation, and is being brought to pass until we all together come unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulfilment of the Messiah.

II.—*Which maketh both one.*

- (a) Matrimony is the great symbol of the Church (Eph. v. 25-32); they shall be no more twain but one flesh. Personality is never realized to the full while one lives to oneself. In the Church this is brought to pass in the surrender of individualism to the formation of the one new man. He that loseth his life shall find it.
- (b) And Advent leads us to consider the union established between God and man. God and men were two, divided by sin, alienated by human ignorance, opposed by human self-will. The great King of the Gentiles and God of Israel has joined them to God in his person, through redemption and grace.
- (c) The antiphon seems to consider the Corner-stone as binding together the two walls of Judaism and the Gentile world. S. Paul's language (Eph. ii. 14) is, however, no part of the symbol of the Corner-stone; for he regards the individual members, Jew or Gentile, as alike stones in the walls (Eph. ii. 19, 22). In the light of that higher union we should never despair of the divisions which separate Christians to-day into rival walls, nor acquiesce in the separateness.

III.—*Whom thou didst fashion from the dust of the earth.*

- (a) There is a tendency to impatience, whether over the imperfections of individuals or of the Church. Fashioned from the dust of earth will be sufficient explanation to calm impatience and raise hope. The words go back to Gen. ii. 7, and illustrate again the corner-stone in the unifying of dust of the ground and the breath of God in the development of human life.
- (b) The words are a strong reminder that he who made all can unify all in himself. All creation, perfect in the mind of God—for the Corner-stone was laid of old, Job xxxviii. 6, 7—groaneth and travaileth in pain; but diversity is temporary, and we approach unity as we grow up into him in all things.
- (c) Thus there is great hope here of the unifying of self also. We seem to be such contradictions, but further advance will unify. In the future we hope to find no self-contradictions, and in the attainment of a larger unity we look confidently to the realization of the true self.

(For S. THOMAS, see page 419.)

☉ Pastor !

DECEMBER 23

"O Shepherd of Israel, Lord over the house of David, Whose goings forth have been from of old, even from everlasting; come thou, feed thy people in thy strength and rule them in equity and judgment."

Picture: the Good Shepherd of Psalm xxiii.

Praise God for the Good Shepherd, the true Pastor of his people.

I.—*The prophecy of Micah.*

- (a) Isaiah associated the Messiah with the history of the royal house and in relation to Jerusalem. His rustic contemporary, Micah, went back to purer sources, to the village shepherd life of the great David (Micah v. 2). Little Bethlehem, the smallest of Israel's divisions, and David a son of the people.
- (b) At this season our thoughts likewise go back to Bethlehem, to a carpenter and his young wife, of the people, and to the welcome given appropriately to the new born Child by the shepherds of those fields in which David had of old watched his father's sheep.
- (c) Great dignity of thought is added by the next words, also from Micah (v. 4). Out from the eternal mind of God, hinted at through the dim ages of shepherd patriarchs, and Jewish pastoral life, prepared for by religious song (e.g. Ps. lxxx.), and prophecy (e.g. Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24), the great scion of the royal house of David has come to his throne, and in deepest verity proves to be one whose generation is from everlasting.

II.—*O Shepherd !*

- (a) Many aspects of the Incarnation have been suggested by these antiphons. The last one fitly draws the mind to contemplate the scene of the Christmas revelation, and as fitly closes the series with the thought of the true Pastor of the flock, and hints at the strength against which no enemy can prevail.
- (b) Like a faithful pastor he is always with his flock, to lead them in and out of the fold in safety with true liberty of intellect and will. He knows them all by name, watches over them by day and night, leads them to the best pastures, brings them home when they wander.
- (c) It is a good ending to the O's. The deep mysteries of the Incarnation in regard to the problems and ideals of human life and thought must not substitute a religion of intellectualism for the simple confidence with which the Christian sheep are to trust the faithful ministrations of the tender Shepherd.

III.—*Feeding and ruling.*

- (a) The Shepherd feeds his flock (Micah v. 4), making it to lie down in the pastures of green grass (Ps. xxiii. 2). The sacraments of the Church are the direct gifts of the Incarnation, provided and ministered by the Good Shepherd. And those whom he thus nourishes he feeds at all times with food convenient for them. His word also feeds his people, for man liveth by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.
- (b) And he rules: the rod and staff comfort. As a good shepherd he varies his tone; now he encourages, now teaches, now checks, now speaks sternly, as the sheep needs. And while each individual sheep seems to be his peculiar care he shepherds the whole flock (Isa. xl. 11; Ezekiel xxxvii. 22-25) upon the mountains of Israel, where they dwell in the land of their fathers.
- (c) There is a sterner aspect of Shepherd's rule. His club must protect the sheep against wolves and robbers. David rescued his sheep from the lion and the bear; the greater David is to be the Shepherd-King and to rule the alien nations with a rod of iron (Ps. ii. 9, reading "shepherd" for "break," as see Apoc. ii. 27). But the sheep know only the crook, and he rules them in equity and judgment.

(For *O Virgo virginum !* see page 414.)

Prisoners of Hope

CHRISTMAS EVE

"*Ye prisoners of hope.*"—Zech. ix. 12.

Picture: the world on Christmas Eve.

Resolve: worship and gladness of heart.

I.—*There was silence in heaven.*

- (a) S. John the Divine has used the simile of the space of a half hour's silence in heaven (Apoc. viii. 1). Consider some occasions for such silence. What changes have come over this earth since first the crude form of life appeared! Epoch-making ages, ushered in by climaxes at which we dimly guess, have changed its form. At last *man* has appeared. The hosts of heaven recognize the image of God in him.
- (b) Ages pass by. The angelic courts know now that at some time the Divine Word and Son will be incarnated on earth as Man. The preparation is drawing to a close. Nine months ago he came down to take up his abode in the womb of a virgin in a country village. The world knew nothing: The Almighty works in silence. But angels desire to look into the mystery of the Incarnation (1 Peter i. 12).
- (c) In the country one may go out into the lanes on a snowy Christmas Eve; behind one in the house one has left the noise; one knows that in other houses there is also noise: but out under the star-lit heaven is stillness. So one may think of the silence in heaven to-night, waiting in expectant breath on the Advent of a Babe, that heaven's courts may re-echo with his worship.

II.—*And all the world a solemn stillness holds.*

- (a) Picture the world of sin, suffering and sorrow, dumbly waiting, prisoners of hope, upon the birth of the world's Saviour. Try to realize the silent burden of the world; the anxious hearts, the careworn lives, the secret sorrows, the sin-stained conscience.
- (b) What does not lie hidden in the silence of Christmas Eve? No need to go back to the human society of the first century. Sufficient to take my own city, town, or even village to-day. In this house love once was, and now the love is dead. Here all looks peaceful, but beneath is the secret grief of an aching heart. Elsewhere it is the sick bed, or a bereaved family.
- (c) There is a picture of all sorts and conditions of men, women and children stretching out their arms to the Saviour of the world. That is what one thinks of at Christmas Eve in connection with these sad thoughts. We seem to see the arms stretched out almost despairingly to the unseen, as men who blindly grope after a message of hope, unconscious that this very energy of hope is itself the result of this night's Birth. And these prisoners of hope do not see, as we see, the Saviour of the world in their midst.

III.—*A multitude of the heavenly host.*

- (a) But hearken! if your ears are attuned to heavenly sound. There is a music thrilling through heaven. A multitude of the heavenly host is praising God. They have taken up in *Gloria in excelsis* the message to man of a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. All is silent on earth as when a sinner repents; but there is joy among the angels.
- (b) In that joy we Christians share. We Christians do not stretch forth our arms in the dumb agony of conviction that there must be hope somewhere, but because we see the Saviour of mankind in our midst; because we see in him the love for hearts which are empty; the strength of innocence for those who have fallen; the one who has pierced the veil of death; the life and the resurrection.
- (c) And all this we realize as we go to the city of David to see a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. We picture him awake, with eyes fixed on us in love and confidence, and arms outstretched to us, as we have often seen in a cradle. Or, asleep, untroubled; for why should he be restless who holds the world in the hollow of his hand? And quietly we kneel, and reverently kiss, and whisper our *Gloria in excelsis* together with the angels.

The Crib

CHRISTMAS DAY

"As it was told unto them."—S. Luke ii. 20.

Picture: the Crib.

Resolve: a Christmas in fellowship with Christ.

I.—*Christmas.*

- (a) A family festival. In many of its associations more social than Christian, yet with the halo of religion about it. A conservative feast, attempting to keep up the unity of the family, and to revive the past years. Whatever such a Christmas may be to adults, the appearance of festivity is maintained, and one has the memory of happy Christmases in the past.
- (b) But something of disillusionment for us who are older, unless the deeper note has been struck. We come to regard it as the children's feast; whereas really it is for us that its lessons are significant. Memory supplies a vein of sadness, and even if we value the revelation, the undercurrent of the world's sorrows is there, although we hide it.
- (c) In Church the true chord is struck: Jubilation at the world's salvation. But we cannot always rise to this height, and are even foolish enough sometimes to think that the Babe makes it a feast for the little ones, while we are fitter for the message of Passiontide and the hope of the Resurrection. Yet they can only enjoy it, which is what they are meant to do, while we should understand it.

II.—*The Crib.*

- (a) It is the adult who understands the Crib; to the child it is only pretty. Think of it. There are the Babe, and the Mother, and the old foster-father. Is it not as it has been told to us? The Christian home and family are a revolution made by the Child in the manger: is there anything more God-like than the first baby in the Christian family? The sanctity of marriage, and its sacramental power on life; the consecration of man's service to the protection of woman and of childhood; the power of a child's presence.
- (b) The Crib speaks to us of the sorrows and distress of the world. It is the knowledge that, however little we penetrate into the ways of God's working, he has boldly faced the poverty and business of life in the gift of the Incarnation, by coming directly into it and choosing for the birth-chamber the busy inn, the time of the enrolment, and the homeliness of the common people whose life had to be spent in home-work and shop-work.
- (c) The Crib in the manger, while the busy inn is full of its life, unheeding because not knowing. It is life as we know it; the teeming city population, the crowded courts, and here the nearly empty church in the midst, an evidence of indifference and misunderstanding. But the Child smiles in his sleep; he is among his own. And if we are not too proud to bend the knee, we rise with renewed fervour to carry the Child in our hearts into daily life.

III.—*The life.*

- (a) To the child it is an emotion. But is it not more? Go back to childhood, to the mother's prayers and teaching; to boyhood, with its visions. Is that early life to be despised by comparison with later disillusionment? Is it not part of the adult's sadness at Christmas that he has not fulfilled the hope of early years, that the brightness which has gone out of life is not all due to the external burden of the world? We have not increased in favour with God and man.
- (b) The adult must bring himself to the Crib, and not shrink from it. He must bring what has been told unto him in the inner voice of conscience, responding to grace or resisting. "I bring you good tidings of great joy—a Saviour." Him known as Saviour is the only way to enter into Christmas for us; him in the midst of our life's actualities; heaven and earth joined.
- (c) Look back on life another way. He has come unto his own; this life of ours is his place, if he is to be Saviour. Has he failed of all that was told us? He has not left us; through what troubles he has brought us; how he has guided us when we thought ourselves independent; kept us in spite of ourselves. Is he not in the midst of our life now? Surely it is we who best know what Christmas is!

The King born in Bethlehem

DECEMBER 26

"And laid him in a manger."—S. Luke ii. 7.

Picture : the holy child born in a crowded stable.

Resolve : to reverence Christ in your daily life.

I.—*No room in the inn.*

- (a) There was no cruelty or irreverence in this. It was a busy season, and Mary and Joseph arrived late. Working class people do not expect exceptional consideration, and these two travellers were grateful for the kindly sympathy which made the best provision that was possible. Nor were the conditions so hard as modern Englishmen might suppose.
- (b) To-day we find so much that is well-intentioned, so much human kindness in the world seemingly occupied entirely with its own concerns, that we are perplexed that men do not recognize Christ in the midst of their daily lives. So we wonder why in that busy village none was aware of the Child who was to be born in the stable. His advent was beyond the range of their ideas, and it was fitting that he who came to revolutionize men's ideas of life should not find them ready to receive him. From the first Christ has had to make the way for his true reception.
- (c) As with patience he lay unrecognized in the stable, so we must share this patience and not seek for him a false welcome from the crowded inn. As with patience he accepted what was offered him, yet did not reveal himself to those who could not receive him aright, so we must patiently accept the natural reverence which the world now gives him, while praying for the true conversion of hearts.

II.—*Born in Bethlehem.*

- (a) Because the world's affairs so ordered it. At another time there would have been room in the inn, but even in his birth he showed his submission to the conditions of human life. He conquers through submission. We ought never to rebel against the conditions of life as being unfavourable, for through them the divine will is fulfilled.
- (b) At another time he might have been born amid the comforts of home. It was fitting that he who left his home to visit this world should be born away from home. And it was not the world which caused him to be born then, and there ; but the Divine Father who orders all the affairs of natural life. Where he ordains there is a divine fitness far outweighing the apparent unfitness.
- (c) Where more fitly should the Christ be born than in a crowd of busy national life, unostentatiously, amid the people ? One likes to reflect upon his entry into human life amid the political enrolment which was relating the provincial nation to the imperial life. Christ in nation and politics.

III.—*Born King of the Jews.*

- (a) The claim heightens the circumstances of the Nativity. No earthly trappings could add to his dignity as the manger straw set him forth claiming kingship by virtue of his personality. Royal Bethlehem befitted him more than the capital where resided Herod in his miserably acquired kingship.
- (b) His was a new kind of kingship, more exacting, independent of all accessories : a sway over men's hearts and motives ; dominant and imperative, and penetrating beyond the demand of any Caesar. And so he was born just where and when the family of David was declaring that it had no king but Caesar. And silently by his presence he made his claim (Cp. S. John xviii. 33 ; xix. 15).
- (c) His Conception was unique ; his birth was natural. Pray that he may thus sanctify by a true conversion of the holy Spirit the every-day human life. He now claims human life as it is, amid its natural surroundings, but not estimated by a human standard ; just as then by the circumstances of his birth he silently protested against the natural Jewish interpretation of their life.

(For S. STEPHEN, S. JOHN, HOLY INNOCENTS, see pages 420-422.)

The Companions in the Stable

DECEMBER 27

"And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the Babe."—
S. Luke ii. 16.

Picture: the visit of the shepherds.

Pray: for the increase of true devotion to Christ in daily life.

I.—*The shepherds.*

- (a) No need to exaggerate circumstances which are so simply fitting. Jesus Christ was not born in abject poverty because he was born in a manger; but he was born in the centre of human life and work, in the crowd; and his infancy was tended by a peasant mother and a hard-working carpenter, and welcomed by simple shepherds. The surroundings of his birth were typical of the work-a-day world.
- (b) The devotion of the shepherds is the undying record of the revelation of Christ in the pursuit of duty. They adored and went back to daily life. We do not read of them again, but we know that henceforth they could never forget the vision of that night or the visit to the stable. Devotion to Christ is no excuse for the neglect of daily duties.
- (c) And the shepherds illustrate that simplicity of heart is the condition of recognizing Jesus Christ. The rabbis studied Messianic prophecy and failed to interpret it because they read their own ideas into it. The shepherds fed their flocks with a clear conscience, and obeyed with simplicity the sign. A babe was to be the sign. Their singleness was rewarded; their hearts were opened and in the sign they saw the gift. They worshipped the babe.

II.—*S. Joseph.*

- (a) The revelation to S. Joseph was deeper than to the shepherds, and a corresponding demand was made upon him. The heaviest of trials was laid upon a loyal spouse, and faith rose to the demand in response to the word of God. "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife."
- (b) But there is the same faithfulness to daily life and duty. Devotion to a tender wife and obedience to a national law. And the carpenter remained a carpenter: to be foster-father to the Holy Child was not incompatible with the labour at the bench. It has been well said that we may be sure that in one workshop in Nazareth tables were made to stand on all-fours.
- (c) To S. Joseph was the devotion of material service vouchsafed. The continued care of the Mother, the burdensome journey to Egypt to escape from Herod, and then the reward of faithfulness was given in the joy of labour for Mother and Child. In simplicity of soul he lived and died before the Holy Child was manifested, receiving no reward beyond the joy of his home.

III.—*S. Mary.*

- (a) The same promptness of faith is manifested in her. "Be it unto me according to thy word." And mark further the self-control of a devotion filled with faith: it was nourished in silence, and it manifested itself in the maternal duties of home life.
- (b) The true spirit of devotion seeks nothing for itself, and has its reward in the fellowship of faithful service. Mary was content to spend her years unknown; she remained unspoiled by mother's pride at the visits of the shepherds and of the wise men; she sought for no recognition in her village as the mother of a wonderful child. Yet how often is one abashed at the petty considerations which those expect, who have in sentimental self-pleasing addicted themselves to works of piety and devotion.
- (c) And for nearly the whole of his life on earth the surroundings of the Son of Mary were this village home, workshop and companionship. Here he learned obedience under the conditions of daily life as his human life expanded from infancy to childhood, youth and early manhood, and fully developed human powers. He was subject unto them. And not even when the call of God led him to his ministry did his mother neglect her home duties to follow his public life. These lessons of the worship of serving Christ in daily life are to be found if we read aright the picture of the shepherds' visit to the cradle.

The Light born by Night

DECEMBER 28

"By night."—S. Luke ii. 8.

Picture: the dark night, and the stable lighted by the Child.

Resolve: to cultivate Christian brightness.

I.—*The temptation to gloom.*

- (a) The Christian is not naturally the most hopeful and cheerful of men, if he only accept the Christian demands without the Christian encouragement. For he does not dwell exclusively upon the superficial enjoyments of life, selfishly putting out of his mind what is sad. He faces life's inequalities and misery; in the poor and the sick he seeks Christ, and he cannot hide from himself how much remains undone.
- (b) And he views sin as the man of the world cannot. It is no question of impropriety, nor is it merely its selfishness or brutality that shocks him. He has eternity in view, and so far as human life omits this consideration, the Christian realizes that it lieth in darkness.
- (c) And he takes a less complacent view of himself by reason of this widened horizon. He cannot be satisfied with himself merely because his external conditions are easy; nay, he recognizes that such circumstances increase his obligation. But, further, he judges his conduct and motives by a standard which is beyond his attainment; he has never done enough, he is never good enough.

II.—*The Christian reflection.*

- (a) At this season the Christian is greatly impressed by the fact that Jesus Christ has come down into this darkness of the world. He came by night. Within himself he knows that Christ is the light which illuminates his path and brightens his whole life. The world is not left without remedy.
- (b) And he reflects that Jesus Christ became man after we had sinned; that his coming has been a direct dealing with this human life of our experience, from the first moment of his unrecognized birth in the village of prophecy. He rejoices to realize that in his own fellowship with Christ he is understood.
- (c) And he is convinced that it is not for nothing that he has come into the darkness of this world, and that it is not for himself. Consider that he moved in this great world, entered into its life, and yet did not go into despair over it, although he came to it from the eternal joys of heaven. The Holy Babe smiles to find the courts of heaven in a stable. Nor did depressing gloom ever settle on him as his human consciousness advanced in experience.

III.—*The Christian principle.*

- (a) The Christian is therefore full of hope and brightness because his Saviour was so. It is not only that he imitates him, but much more that he finds in him the conviction of his hopes, and the right way of facing the present in the spirit of certain hope. And this spirit of Jesus Christ is breathed into his regenerate life.
- (b) Now the principle of Christ's human life was the doing of the Father's will in fellowship with him. No one can do the Father's will except he live in fellowship with him; even to try to do so apart from fellowship is appallingly depressing; it is a yoke which we cannot bear. The Christian is gloomy not because he is so good that he is shocked at the world, but because he is trying to do an impossibility.
- (c) How, then, shall I learn this Christmas to cultivate Christian brightness? By going back to the stable. That Holy Child means God and man in fellowship, God and sinner reconciled. It means "Good tidings." The world is not dark where Jesus Christ lightens it. His light must never grow dim within me, and in his light the world looks different, for we shall see it in the assurance of Divine purposes.

Tidings of Great Joy

DECEMBER 29

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."—Rom. xv. 13.

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy."—S. Luke ii. 10.

Picture: the joy of the Holy Family.

Resolve: to make my joy at this season more truly Christian.

I.—Some general considerations.

- (a) Joy is the satisfaction of keen and deep desires. It is not to be identified with happiness, than which it is more substantial. It has nothing to do with excitement. Enthusiasm is the expression of this hopefulness which is born of joy, but much passes for enthusiasm which is not rooted in joy, and which is evanescent.
- (b) Christian joy is the satisfaction found in Jesus Christ of keen *spiritual* desires. The Prayer Book office of public baptism of infants has the words, "joyful through hope," in reference to the grace of the sacrament. Of all joys it is the greatest, because it arises out of the deepest forces of the human heart, and satisfies the aspirations of humanity for the interpretation of life. The Incarnation is the peace of man with God, the hope of humanity, our rest in perplexity.
- (c) Primitive Christianity was marked by joy. "Rejoice in the Lord always." The apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name (Acts v. 41). They regarded joy as one of the chief fruits of the Spirit. But the outward condition of their lives was not suggestive of joy, for through much tribulation they entered the kingdom of God. Nor was religion at that time much connected with joy, for to the heathen it was rather a matter of custom or of fear, and to the Jew it was a burden.

II.—Some reasons of our little joy.

- (a) Nor is joy peculiarly characteristic of modern Christianity, and hence we have lost the enthusiasm of earlier ages. Our religion is often too much a matter of restraint and of obligation. It neither possesses our *whole* life, nor enters deeply enough into our being. Our desires are worldly rather than spiritual, and with these our religion clashes. We cultivate just enough religion to make us dissatisfied with ourselves, and we do not penetrate into it sufficiently to develop our spiritual desires.
- (b) We do not believe heartily in God. Our religion is too full of doubt, spiritual and intellectual: we neither cast ourselves entirely upon God, nor do we enter into the larger faith which can face boldly the perplexities of life and step forward into them together with God, saying, "*he* understands; *he* is working out his will."
- (c) To the early Christians Jesus Christ was a great fact. He had come, he had redeemed them, brought them out of darkness into light; he was coming again. Meanwhile he was in them, and they in him. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? But what do we know of this daily and intimate fellowship? How far do we realize Jesus Christ?

III.—How to increase our joy.

- (a) The best consideration upon this is to examine ourselves on the points just given, and to make necessary resolutions. No other royal road can be pointed out: religion must be the first and absorbing interest of the heart; it must embrace a clear and exhaustive faith in God, and a close companionship with the Saviour of our lives. Thus we must dwell in mind much upon the substantial hope given us in Jesus Christ, a hope sure and steadfast.
- (b) It will help us greatly, if we are doing this, to remember that we must increase the joy of others, especially their spiritual joy. A religion which looks much at self will never be joyful; it is not Christ's religion. Going out of oneself opens the heart of Jesus Christ to us. Thus in the N.T. joy is even associated much with suffering, and yet more so because the suffering chiefly contemplated there is for Christ's Name. We can neither suffer for him unless we are closely knit to him, nor can we thus be experiencing his power in us without the deep joy of fellowship with him.
- (c) It will also greatly help us if we pay more attention to the sacramental life, the essence of which is, "Abide in me and I in you." The allegory of the Vine was given that his joy might remain in us, and that our joy might be fulfilled (S. John xv. 11). Make all life a preparation and a thanksgiving for communions, that communions may be the way of communion and fellowship.

Peace on Earth

DECEMBER 30.

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."—Rom. xv. 13.

"Peace on earth among men in whom he is well pleased."—S. Luke ii. 14, R.V.

Picture: Simeon and the Holy Child: his *Nunc dimittis*.

Resolve: to enter into his peace, who can keep one's heart.

I.—*The Prince of Peace.*

- (a) Solomon, the man of peace, built God's temple, and became the type of David's greater son. The greater than Solomon was in a far higher degree a man of peace. In his ministry he was at peace, although he came to bring not peace but a sword. In the home at Nazareth he was at peace. In himself he had peace; peace with God, and in all his relationships that harmony and unity which are the conditions of peace.
- (b) It is noteworthy, too, that he came at a time of peace; the great Roman world was at rest, and his apostles began the missionary life of his Church under these favourable conditions. The Jewish nation was at peace; that restless excitement of political discontent, which was almost then beginning to launch the nation on her troublesome voyage which in the year 70 brought her to shipwreck, was not as yet sufficiently advanced to confuse his revelation with worldly struggles.
- (c) He gave peace. What infinite peace in the days of infancy to his Mother! Simeon felt himself dismissed in peace. Had his own nation known it, he was their peace, the Harmonizer and Fulfiller of Judaism, giving peace and not a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear, and making peace between the divided races of Jew and Gentile.

II.—*He is our peace.*

- (a) The words of the angel to the shepherds mean that peace is given to mankind in the child of his good pleasure who is now born. His good pleasure is revealed in the gift which brings peace. For this child is our righteousness, who makes peace between fallen man and God. Without righteousness and right relation as a basis, there is no peace with God. But upon him was the chastisement of our peace.
- (b) He who thus maketh peace is our peace. For life is multiform, and he alone can bring peace who harmonizes its variety; and Jesus Christ does this in his own person. The gift of himself to be our life unifies the divergent elements of our being. He interprets our life to us, relates it aright to our fellow-men, and brings it into conscious fellowship with God.
- (c) And, too, he is final, the Fulfiller of all the purposes of Creation. There is no essential peace where there is not the harmony of finality. He who in the past ages spake to the fathers in the diversity of partial and temporary revelation hath, in the end of the days, spoken unto us in a Son, the impress of his substance, Jesus Christ the satisfaction of the human heart.

III.—*The peace of God keep your hearts.*

- (a) At the close of the first section of the Epistle to the Romans, S. Paul has written according to the A.V., "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God": but the R.V. has "let us have peace with God." The distinction is of value. Hitherto in these notes we have considered the former; let us now ask, if he is our peace, why do I as a Christian realize so little peace in my life? The reasons may be different in different persons. "The blood of Jesus whispers peace within." How far in simplicity based upon humble contrition do I embrace the great revelation of God's grace, keep it before me, and live my life upon it?
- (b) It is great peace to know that while I am still very full of sin, yet I am accepted in the Beloved. This basal peace may co-exist with much that ruffles the surface of peace, faults which arise from lack of response to grace, from self-confidence, or lack of trust in God. Let me enter more into God's peace which will keep the heart. If I value his peace more I shall not soon be attracted elsewhere.
- (c) I have yet to advance in the knowledge and love of God so that with S. Paul I can say that all things work together for good—adverse circumstances and the opposition of men—to them that love God. Anxiety and restlessness disturb the peace of God until I can fully trust in him: but the Spirit of Christ, who is my peace, gives the fruit of peace, so that the apostle can say that as much as lieth in *you*, live peaceably with all men.

Waiting for God the Saviour

DECEMBER 31

"Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us."—Isa. xxv. 9.

Picture: the Manger-crib.

Resolve: acts of homage.

I.—*The prophet and his words.*

- (a) His thoughts are of the victory of Hezekiah over Sennacherib, the deliverance of Israel from depopulation and devastation, from loss of national life, and destruction of religious hopes. There had been dismay, Hezekiah had spread the matter before the Lord, and now that the Assyrian hopes had been shattered, Isaiah, who had never lost faith, burst forth into rejoicing.
- (b) There is a great difference between the age of Hezekiah and our own. The Jewish prophets ascribed everything to the hand of God; our modern prophets, such as they are, talk vaguely of sequence of events, tendencies of the age, and the like. Just so they must explain him, at whose birth we rejoice, by contemporary thought and environment. They see just under their noses, and are so pleased with themselves, that they refuse to believe that there is anything which they do not see.
- (c) But he that believes in God, while he may not see very far, yet sees aright and does not confuse circumstance with cause, immediate cause with ultimate. He sees eternally, for the immediate is an unfolding of the will of the Unchangeable God. Thus Isaiah's words are a prophecy of the first coming as indeed also of the last Advent. The victory over Sennacherib is a foretaste of the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

II.—*We have waited for him.*

- (a) It had been a severe waiting for Isaiah, who stands out above his generation as the man of faith. It had been a poor waiting on the part of Hezekiah and the people; but the Almighty seeth not as man seeth. And there were those who were waiting for the consolation of Israel in the days of Herod, and who shall say that their intercession was not availing?
- (b) If we read the Incarnation aright, is not the Church now a waiting Church, with faith which is quickened by his presence? In spite of Jewish prophecy there were not many who were waiting for his first coming: in spite of promise, the Church is very ready to live in the present, rather than to wait for the promise of his power and his manifested glory.
- (c) But the God of patience waits, as he waited through the ages of Jewish history, as he waited while the Babe in the manger slept, and until he grew to manhood. And the Divine Saviour waited and yet waits, bidding us not make haste to grasp at speedy remedies and temporary means of expediency. It was the lesson which was to be learnt by the men of Isaiah's days, and has still to be learnt by us (Isa. xxx. 15; xxxiii. 2; Contrast Isa. xxx. 2 f; xxxi. 1).

III.—*Lo, this is our God, and he will save us.*

- (a) Isaiah xxv. -xxvii. may be post-exilic, but they breathe the spirit of Isaiah's strong confidence in God. And if the faithful in this later age were helped by the history of Isaiah and the deliverance of Jerusalem, we, who can read a little fuller meaning into these words, may be strengthened in the revelation of Emmanuel, Jesus, to wait for him in the perplexities of our hearts and the problems of our generation.
- (b) For the strength to wait is the touchstone of faith. Can one worship at the manger, and say "Lo! this is our God, and he will save us"? Try your faith: put it to the test. If this be the revelation of Christmas, if the Word be made flesh, then we wait for him in the manifestation of life, in the progress of his Church, but we do not wait for him as they waited in the days of Hezekiah, but we wait in fellowship with him who is with us all the days even to the end of the world.
- (c) The words as they were first written looked to a temporal salvation, which required nevertheless a spiritual condition. In the Babe of Bethlehem the salvation has been raised to a new conception, and yet even so we can but partially interpret it. To the Manger we are to go, and salute the Saviour, with our acts of worship and faith, who believe in the forgiveness of sins and deliverance from evil.

Circumcision and Baptism

THE CIRCUMCISION

"*The circumcising of the Child.*"—S. Luke ii. 21.

Picture: the difference between circumcision and baptism.

Resolve: to use life aright this year.

I.—*The Octave of Christmas.*

- (a) The feast of the Circumcision is the octave day of Christmas. This is quite accidental, being merely due to the fact that the eighth day was the time for Circumcision. But it is very suggestive to us, because it brings the home life of Jesus into close relation with our own lives. An infant at once begins its experience of pain.
- (b) An infant belongs to its age, and is the heir of the past. It is born into a society with ideas, customs, and limitations. So soon as it is born it feels the effect of its environment and inheritance. The Circumcision of Jesus may be regarded as the first innocent suffering of the Babe, his share in human society, his inheritance of the past.
- (c) The student of religious ideas associates a long history with the practice of Circumcision. In far back ages the ideas are coarse or even repulsive to us. But by degrees they have been elevated, until for a long period they have been associated with very high and religious conceptions. Jesus Christ did not despise this association with the age-long history of men's religious ideas. It was a true experience of his humanity.

II.—*Religious ideas of Circumcision.*

- (a) Among the Jews the conception of a covenant relation with God and fellowship with the holy nation was prominently associated with Circumcision. This presents no difficulty, and it is profoundly unfolded in Baptism. But its other chief idea was that of mortification, which also has been heightened in the Sacrament of burial and resurrection to the life of the new man.
- (b) But in relation to Jesus Christ the symbol of mortification in his infancy demands careful thought, to avoid on the one hand the suggestion of any original taint, and to preserve on the other hand the truth that true humanity has true human passions, and that true humanity subjects them to the control of the will.
- (c) Thus even in his infancy he corresponds to the true life of humanity. Not by rebellion, but by stooping to conquer, the true life of man is revealed in the Son of Man. It is a false view of life which pities its conditions; for salvation is through life. Not by isolation, and withdrawal from common experience, but by the fellowship of experience in the common life is the redemption of life to be realized.

III.—*Circumcision and Baptism.*

- (a) Christianity is right in having dropped circumcision and substituted baptism, in having departed herein from the O.T. and having adopted the associations of heathenism. It is a rite to which Jews could submit, and which Gentiles could receive without association with Judaism. Even regarded merely as a rite, baptism speaks more clearly of new birth, of resurrection, and of washing off the old.
- (b) And the Sacrament of baptism, regarded again merely as a rite, is less material than circumcision, in that it leaves no permanent sign upon the initiated. And further, its association is directly with the mission of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon its inauguration. It strikes too a deeper note in repentance than in mortification.
- (c) And nevertheless the Church has recorded the circumcision of Jesus, and with it stands written the emphasis of his human name which signifies his office. His circumcision is thus related to the conditions of human life as regarded by the Christian. Life, rightly used, with all that it involves of suffering and limitation, is that in which he wills to save those who will enter into it in God. The Circumcision is an interpretation of the Incarnation, an Epiphany of life.

A New Year's Promise

JANUARY 2

"The Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest."—Josh. i. 9.

Picture: Joshua on the eve of a great venture being encouraged by the promise of God's presence.

Resolve: to encourage myself daily by the promise of God's presence.

I.—*Consider the circumstances of Joshua.*

- (a) He had already made proof of God's presence and what it involved: the battle against Amalek; the forty days' journey to view the land he was now to conquer. And as Moses' servant for many years, he now learnt that his past had been a divine preparation for the life which lay before him.
- (b) He stood at a critical moment between past and future. It was possible for him to go forward in self-confidence; had he not spied out the land and been proved faithful? But God knew his servant and encouraged him; encouragement is often the most sobering of warnings. He was the obvious person to succeed Moses, and the critical nature of the moment might escape notice; and as we look ahead into this year there may very likely seem nothing in prospect to call for special warning or encouragement.
- (c) Happily the details of the future were hidden from him as from us. He was to conquer the land. The difficulties need not be anticipated; Joshua could meet them, as they came, in the strength of this promise, and by overcoming them enter into the possession of the promised land. "Be strong and of good courage."

II.—*A solemn warning.*

- (a) In a terrible significance the words are true, however the promise be disregarded. We cannot escape from the presence of God, even if we fly from Him; and he penetrates into the recesses of the mind. Think of the words of Ps. cxxxix., and be sobered by them to pray, "And lead me in the way everlasting."
- (b) There are double lives, and only the grace of God can preserve us from such; one life seen by men is carefully guarded and all possible pains are taken that it may not be discredited. But there is another side to us; is it one with the life seen? Could we bear to have it exhibited and feel that men would say that it is substantially the same that they had seen?
- (c) But God sees both and estimates as one the life which includes both. In the light of these warning words we must try that two lives—the open and the hidden—may be a single life; that what man sees may only differ from what God sees in the fact that hidden from men's sight is earnest aspiration, holy ambition and prayerful struggle which true humility hides from exhibition.

III.—*A magnificent promise.*

- (a) The same words are promise as well as warning. Where the hidden aspirations of life strive to express themselves, and men, knowing next to nothing of our difficulties, judge us critically, there is One who estimates more truly, and regards the struggle and the intention. "Thou God seest me" is to be for us an encouraging assurance rather than a warning.
- (b) In the strength of these words we enter the unknown future. "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." Unknown to us it is not so to him, who leads us into it. How much better, then, that he should choose our path! Turn the literal truth of the words into a voluntary companionship, and they become a trumpet call for our response; "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."
- (c) The words were said by God to one who was about to enter the promised land; they were a guarantee of conquest. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The new year of grace will be found in the application of these words to be still true to their context. With God the road which lies as yet unseen is the going in conquest into the promised land.

The Circumcision of Jesus

JANUARY 3

"Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy."—Rom. xv. 8, 9.

Consider: Jesus Christ, circumcised in heart, unfolding the will of God by submission to it.

A practical resolution of mortification.

I.—*A minister for the truth of God.*

- (a) The truth of God is revealed in the facts of history: to contradict this evidence is to deny the truth of God. Sometimes this is done shamelessly in the interests of partizanship by onesidedness or by *suppressio veri*; more often it is done unconsciously by resisting the conclusions of history, whether by refusing to learn its lessons or by an endeavour to reproduce what has passed away.
- (b) The conditions under which we have to live and to do God's will are for us the limitations which bind us as ministers of circumcision for the truth of God. No doubt it is a mortification to us to be placed in an age and country in which men do not believe in Church and Sacraments. But we shall not be ministers for the truth of God either by kicking against the conditions of our life or by trying to revive the past.
- (c) It is not the limitation of circumstances, even though that take the form of a cramped sphere of activity, which impede the will of God; it is the uncircumcision of our hearts. Regard all conditions which seem to hamper, as the opportunity of mortifying our wills for the truth of God, and they will become for us the way of fuller life.

II.—*To both Jew and Gentile.*

- (a) Circumcision was the sign of blessing. All mortification, if it be to God, involves such blessing. Detachment from things lawful, that one may concentrate one's powers more exclusively on him, is a covenant of blessing to Jew and Gentile, the Church and the world. Such detachment involves the Pauline two-fold consideration—self-discipline and edification.
- (b) S. Paul saw the truth of God involved in the old covenant as two-fold in direction. It is easy for us, as it was for the Jews, to think of the Church as existing for herself, and to forget her wider mission to the world. But Judaism withered away because of its exclusiveness; the recognition of the fuller truth is that which expanded into the Christian Church, and fulfilled God's purposes.
- (c) God has of old made great promises to us in the Christian dispensation, as to the Jewish nation he promised a world-wide sphere. The condition in each case is circumcision of heart. To be baptized into the death of Jesus Christ, and to live in the power of a new life rising out of the death of self, is to be circumcised in heart to God.

III.—*Jesus Christ the true minister.*

- (a) Learn to reverence the old covenant not merely as a preparation for Christ, but also—which indeed is involved in this—as revealing the unchangeable principles of God. Reverence the active providence of God in the world, and see its principles as unfolded in the beginnings of Christianity, in the Circumcision and flight into Egypt on the one hand, and the visit of the Gentile wise men on the other.
- (b) Consider your own disqualifications by contrast with Jesus Christ. He humbled himself, who indeed needed no circumcision, and by so doing fulfilled the purpose of God in the widest sphere. Coming as a light to the Gentiles, he submitted to confine himself to his own nation, and to devote his life to a people who rejected him. Pray that your pride and ambition do not thwart the work of God.
- (c) Consider in his circumcision the example of obedience which characterized his human life. Contrast it with your waywardness and slackness, self-will and ease. What do such things minister to others for the truth of God!

The Principle of Circumcision

JANUARY 4

"*The Circumcision of Christ.*"—Col. ii. 11.

Picture: a Christian baptism.

Resolve: to give my will this year into God's keeping.

I.—*S. Paul on circumcision.*

- (a) The great controversy over circumcision was the necessary issue of the revelation which brought principle into the place of law, the spirit into that of the letter, and which thereby broke down the distinction between Jew and Gentile. It was the fiercest of all struggles for Church unity, and its victory saved Christianity from being a tolerated adjunct to Judaism.
- (b) The apostle did not go further than the highest spiritual teaching of Judaism when he insisted upon the circumcision of the heart; he passed beyond it in his assertion that the Gentiles were not to be submitted to the literal rite. Types had disappeared in the revelation of reality; the material had given place to the new creation.
- (c) To the Colossians he boldly asserts that the death of Christ is our circumcision, as daring a statement as that of his to the Galatians, that we Christians are the sons of Isaac, and the Jewish Church are the Ishmaelites. Here, as elsewhere, he is clear in his statement that the Sacrament of Baptism is our burial and resurrection with Christ (Col. ii. 11-12; Rom. vi. 3 ff), for we died with Christ in his death (Rom. vi. 8; Gal. ii. 20).

II.—*A new creature* (Gal. vi. 15).

- (a) Circumcision was a mortification of the flesh; it was also a bond of union in the inheritance of promise. In Judaism it signified an obedient heart, submission to the law of God. But Christianity is not a spiritualized Judaism, it is reality in place of type. Christ's death is our circumcision because in it alone is the fact accomplished which Judaism taught as a duty.
- (b) The new creature is redeemed humanity; mankind died on the cross to the flesh, with all its self-pleasing, self-centred life. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature" (2 Cor. v. 17). Baptism is the application of this to the individual: he rises to the new life. S. Paul's perception of circumcision is nothing less than the death of the old natural being, with its sins, its weakened will, its independent *ego*.
- (c) Here is a New Year lesson: to learn this year to live in Christ so that his life rules within me. To live in him as Saviour, dead to sin through his precious blood, no longer struggling ineffectually to attain to a victory which is beyond my powers, but in fellowship with his life enjoying the victory of his true circumcision. This is the lesson taught in the name Jesus in relation to His Jewish circumcision.

III.—*"The heir of the world"* (Rom. iv. 13).

- (a) It was a bold claim for Abraham, not literally promised in the Old Testament, but implied in the blessing that in him all the nations of the world should be blessed; only to be realized, however, by the Christian, with whom Christ is Abraham's seed, who by his death circumcised human nature. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. iii. 29).
- (b) He who is our circumcision, has said: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (S. Matt. v. 5); and everybody can see a truth in the words, although few realize the beatitude. The meekness, which indeed is participation in his nature, who is meek and lowly of heart, is the spirit of circumcision, which is submission, surrender, and the realization therein of the freedom with which Christ did set us free.
- (c) The heir of the world is certainly he who in union with Christ is sharer in his victory over the world and enters into the fulfilment of the divine purpose of creation. What this is passes our present knowledge, but we realize the fact in freedom from the world's tyranny, in a heart set upon pleasing God, in entering into his will by co-operation, and in the realization that "all things are yours," while also "ye are not your own."

Made under Law

JANUARY 5

"*Made under the law.*"—Gal. iv. 4.

Picture: the Child of Bethlehem submits to circumcision.

Resolve: to practise some voluntary mortification for the submission of the will.

I.—*The Circumcision of Christ.*

- (a) To the unbeliever this is only an episode in the natural history of a Jewish infant. To the Christian it is a problem; he needed no circumcision of the heart, he needed not to be brought into covenant with God, he needed no sign of separation between himself and the uncovenanted, he was universal; why this badge of circumcision, this national limitation?
- (b) It was of divine will: God might have ordered the course of the world differently, so that the Jewish children were not circumcised; and while circumcision was associated with religious truths for the Jew, it was fitting that he who fulfilled the law should submit to it, and that he who came to give the new covenant should first submit to the old.
- (c) It was the first wound in the sacred flesh. He indeed needed no circumcision of heart or flesh, but for us is great need to mortify our corrupt affections. For him it was the entrance upon the life of passion. Consider the baptismal words, "Not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified."

II.—*Submission to law.*

- (a) The universal Lord was circumcised as a Jew. The law of nationality. From him learn the law of fidelity to all relationships, for God has made man social—to the home, the school, the township, the country, the Greater Britain. His circumcision set the seal to the divine dispensations and developments of nations, with their respective characteristics.
- (b) Submission to law as a principle of life. Law is good: sin is lawlessness, says S. John. Laws of nations, public opinion, custom, all have their office. By submission to such on principle and in humble obedience will one best learn when it is a duty to break from law by the obedience to a higher law.
- (c) In circumcision he submitted to ecclesiastical law. We admit the principle, the application is often very difficult in a divided Christendom. The truly circumcised will submit to law whenever he possibly can, even when he is not bound, considering that there is danger in loosening respect for law: S. Paul speaks of a law of edification and a law of self-discipline.

III.—*Natural law.*

- (a) We must apply the lesson of the Circumcision broadly. It was an outward and visible sign of his submission to natural law as appointed by God for the discipline of the human race. At times we are inclined to rebel against the natural law of health in the zeal of good work, in over-study, etc. We are under it; there may be times when we may sacrifice to the glory of God, but we may never presume to be above law.
- (b) There are other natural laws to which we are bound involuntarily. The law of habit; we do not submit ourselves to it when we act in forgetfulness of it, or when we are spiritually perturbed that an old habit should seek to re-assert itself. The law of heredity is more perplexing, and it often leads us to rebel in will against God, when we feel that we have to struggle against certain dispositions more than others do, or when we see a life blighted by inherited weakness or disease. It is God who says "made under law," and he regards his own appointments.
- (c) Submission to law redeems from law. Independence is the natural instinct of life; "ye shall be as gods." We would overcome habit without effort, avoid sin while we tamper with it, acquire graces without striving after them. But he has shewn us that submission to law is the principle of Christian life. Law is illuminated through the Circumcision.

The Three Gifts

THE EPIPHANY

"They offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh."—S. Matt. ii. 11.

Picture : the Magi offering to Christ the gold, frankincense and myrrh, the products of their country.

Resolve : to offer Christ the oblation of my life.

I.—*The gifts of the wise men.*

- (a) They were truly offering to God what was already his. This truth was perceived of old by prophet and psalmist, and it deeply affected their consideration of Jewish sacrifices. Likewise they were offering him the natural products of their own country, the richest gifts which lay to hand ; they did not seek for out-of-the-way gifts to offer, which God had not put at their disposal.
- (b) But they were offering gifts which he had given to them to spend upon themselves or to render back to him. Therein lay the offering : it was a free-will offering, and the intention sanctified the gifts and gave them a value which was no longer material.
- (c) And the gifts contained a hidden import : the gold, frankincense and myrrh were symbolic. Every gift is symbolic of the spirit which sanctifies it. And the material gifts which God places at our disposal are symbolic. By receiving these gifts as from him, and by consecrating them to him we learn their symbolism, and perceive the Creator in the work of his hands.

II.—*The three gifts.*

- (a) The magi illustrate three great gifts : a rightly directed will, a steady perseverance, and deep enthusiasm. Consider these in the history of the journey and offering of these Eastern sages. Such intention will sanctify any gifts which are the product of our human nature. Without such intention the highest endowments of human nature cease to be an offering for the King of kings.
- (b) And these gifts are truly a rendering back to God his own gifts. He has given to us our natural powers and material possessions that he may receive them from our hands transformed by this triple intention, which is the fruit of his own gifts of grace.
- (c) And truly symbolic of the individual is the gift which he renders back to God : by what a man offers to God he may be known. Offer liberally, and spare no trouble in the offering, that it may be meet for him to whom it is offered ; for the personal gift is symbolic of our estimate of him both by its character and by its amount.

III.—*The three gifts correspond to the three theological virtues.*

- (a) A right will corresponds to faith. It is the true estimate of the eternal, the spiritual. It is the fixing of life's intention on the highest. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."
- (b) Perseverance corresponds to hope. Hope is not a future beatitude, but a present one, and it expresses itself in perseverance. "Christ Jesus our hope" (Tim. i. 1). "If we hold fast our boldness and the glorifying of our hope firm unto the end" (Heb. i. 6).
- (c) Enthusiasm corresponds to love, which inspires every gift, and is the flame from heaven which consumes the offering upon the altar that it may ascend as a sweet-smelling savour to God. He offers little who loves little : his enthusiasm is superficial who loves superficially. He who loves deeply and strongly has enthusiasm which springs from the innermost recesses of his being.

The Wise Men and the Slaughter

JANUARY 7

"Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men."—S. Matt. ii. 7.

Picture: the historical connection between the Epiphany and the slaughter of the Innocents.

Resolve: to pray for all sorts and conditions of children.

I.—*The visit of the wise men.*

- (a) No story of the Infancy touches the romance of life as this. The shepherds are homely; the birth is domestic. But here the Bible has given us a scene which we cannot well imagine. Modern criticism deals severely with it, and even the conservative critic is thrown back on the fact of its narration, or on the significance of its lesson. There is a semblance of unreality about it, as though its symbolism is the chief thing which matters.
- (b) Devotionally one offers the thought that as it was fitting on this occasion that the host of heaven should exult, although only the favoured ones knew, so it befits the birth of the world Saviour that the Gentiles as well as the Jews should send their representatives to greet him; while yet the silence in which God is pleased to work should not be broken.
- (c) The Church has given us this incident, and we may well try to learn some of its lessons in the face of the increasing difficulty with which it is felt by devout people to be surrounded. The humbling of intellectual pride is only a part of the lesson; another side is the lesson that they came to see *him*, to worship *him*. We do not believe in the wise men; we believe in Jesus Christ. We can believe that the wise men came, and yet know that salvation is not dependent on such belief.

II.—*The wise men and Herod.*

- (a) But there is a lesson deeper than the narrative of their obeisance. It is involved in the tragedy of their visit. They innocently caused the martyrdom of the babes in Bethlehem. They unconsciously caused the Holy Infant to fly from before the rulers of this world in the person of the notorious Herod.
- (b) Therein was foreshadowed the conflict of Christianity with the powers of the Empire, and the bitter sufferings which were to be the birth-pangs of the Church among the Gentiles. The martyrdoms, the persecutions, of all ages have their epitome in the massacre and the flight.
- (c) And, too, it is the Epiphany of life's shadows. We believe that the problem of the suffering of innocence is here illuminated to faith, not solved nor interpreted. One grave fact of life's experience, so perplexing to us who can see so little of life's meaning, is here recognized and received into the revealed life of Jesus Christ. And therein it is a solemn Epiphany of his Incarnation, a revelation of life as it is.

III.—*The flight and the massacre.*

- (a) In extreme form this narrative forces home the truth that Jesus Christ has entered human life in its complexity and tyranny. And by his own history in it he has revealed the double problem of Christian experience, to be at the mercy of force and evil, and yet to find the victory through it. It is the triumph of the cross in the season of Christmas.
- (b) No problem is keener to-day than that of the injustice of unmerited suffering; the conditions of labour, upbringing which dooms a child's life, the wrongs of women, the perplexity of disease, and the like. The Christian will never acquiesce in these; but what is he to think in the face of his inability to right them? He has but little confidence in Jesus Christ, who will not be encouraged by the experience of his childhood.
- (c) A famous picture has presented the flight into Egypt with the Innocents, garlanded, and glorified, accompanying the Holy Family, flying above them, as they journey. It is the right presentation. The infancy and childhood of Jesus has its victories; he has revealed heaven to us as the home for little children as well as the rest for the weary.

The Wise Men guided

JANUARY 8

"*A light to lighten the Gentiles.*"—S. Luke ii. 32.

Picture: the wise men led by the star to the Light of the world.

"Called on by light towards light they pressed."

Resolve: to pray more for divine guidance in human actions.

I.—*Guided through life by the divine light.*

- (a) It is often easy as one looks back to see how, in spite of self, the Almighty Father has guided one's life. The trials and experiences have been the discipline for present responsibility; out of evil has come good by the grace of God. Valuable to realize this, if one learn therefrom to be content with God's dealings with one to-day.
- (b) This guidance is not confined to one's spiritual experiences. The wise men were astrologers, and the reverent pursuit of their vocation was the fulfilment of God's will to them, and led them at length to Jesus Christ. A right intention to glorify him in one's daily work makes it a light leading us to the Light of the world. Discontent with one's lot turns a vocation into disbelief in God.
- (c) Do not despise the secular life and its discipline. It is God's will for most of us. And through it God can direct the intentions of the heart to himself as well as through the lives of those who are occupied immediately with spiritual things. Call nothing common or unclean which is God's appointment. No life is secular which is devoted to the will of God. Have a great reverence for business life, home life, the narrow spheres of life.

II.—*The guidance not always apparent.*

- (a) The wise men, guided by the star, started on their way. They judged from the star by the light of their reason that they should go to Jerusalem, where they supposed they would find the newly-born king. This error of interpretation led to the massacre of the infants, and flight into Egypt. Nevertheless it was according to the will of God.
- (b) Such a concurrence seems perplexing until we consider that the Almighty submits himself to the laws of human life which he has ordained, and thereby rules them to his end. It is contrary to the conditions of rational life that it should be guided into infallibility of external movements; but where judgment errs, not the will, the over-ruling of God orders all things.
- (c) But the reason which *presumes* to act, through self-will and without seeking the divine guidance, is not thus over-ruled by God. It is better to shrink from great things and from responsibility, unless God orders them for us. But, then, humbly looking to him for guidance step by step, one must act upon one's judgment and never against it. For God has given us judgment and he gives grace to the humble.

III.—*What the wise men were led to.*

- (a) Led to a beginning and not to an end: not to the sight of a king which satisfied, but to a new revelation of God which was only beginning to be unfolded. So it is always. All faithful following of the guidance of God is a progression from stage to stage, unfolding a wider future, opening new visions by the flooding in of light (Prov. iv. 18).
- (b) Led to self-surrender and devotion. It is a hard thing for the magi of any age to bow down before the infant. We do not know what conclusions the wise men carried away with them from their visit, but they worshipped: and he interpreted and accepted their worship.
- (c) Led from a royal palace to a village home. They saw him at last in a cottage. The pride of intellect did not rebel, nor did natural prejudice refuse to acknowledge the divine guidance of the restored star, when it led them to where the young child was. Their wills were true, and God directed them. No interpretation of God's world is true which leads to "But this people which knoweth not the law is accursed."

The King of the Jews

JANUARY 9

"Born King of the Jews."—S. Matt. ii. 2.

Picture: The King himself announcing that the kingdom of God is at hand.

Pray: "Thy kingdom come."

I.—*The idea of the king.*

- (a) The king in early days was looked upon as Divine. Among the Hebrews he was the captain of God (1 Sam. ix. 16): but another strain of Hebrew thought regarded him as usurping the regal authority of God (1 Sam. viii. 7). The foundation of Hebrew prophecy on the kingship is in Nathan's promise to David (2 Sam. vii. 13). In even later days the Romans deified their kings, and faint echoes of primitive conceptions have lingered until late in history in the varied theories of the Divine right of kings.
- (b) The ideal of Hebrew kingship also regarded the king as one of the people: "one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee" (Deut. xvii. 15, and Jer. xxx. 21). Two conditions are thus united which could only find their ideal application in him who was born King of the Jews at this season, and is also Emmanuel, God with us.
- (c) The kingship presents the authority and majesty of God. In these respects Solomon, of whom Nathan's prophecy was first uttered, rather than David was the national ideal. Zechariah has this in mind when prophesying of the Branch, that he shall build the temple and bear the glory, and shall rule upon his throne (vi. 13). It must have remained a paradox how that this same king could be "lowly and riding upon an ass" (Zech. ix. 9), until the hearts of men learned to be ruled by him who was born King in a manger.

II.—*The idea of the kingdom.*

- (a) Its permanence. The vision of Daniel (vii. 27) continued the promise to David by the mouth of Nathan that his kingdom should be established for ever. It was an essential feature of the ideal theocracy that "the Lord is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land" (Ps. x. 16); and the angel announced to S. Mary that her son should fulfil the hopes of the nation (S. Luke i. 33).
- (b) Its universality is inseparable from its permanence. In direct opposition to the selfish reading of the prophets by the bulk of the Jewish nation, their words have found fulfilment in the Divine world-wide sway of hearts, who own the authority of Christ; and the Jews who desired the glory for themselves have lost their glory.
- (c) Its government. The Hebrew kingship, arising in a particular crisis, was desired to meet two needs (1 Sam. viii. 20): under the king's rule and protection the people would cease to do every man that which was right in his own eyes, and they would be protected against the Philistines. These two aspects are inseparable.

III.—*The character of the kingdom.*

- (a) The foundation is righteousness (see Isa. liv. 13-14). It is the great glory of the prophets that they unfolded this. Nathan's prophecy (2 Sam. vii. 14ff), and the Deuteronomic condition of the king (Deut. xvii. 20) both emphasized the truth. In Isaiah's ideal "the people also shall be all righteous" (lx. 21).
- (b) Its condition is peace. Troubled Judah might well lay stress upon peace as characteristic of its ideal monarchy: but it stretched out to a wider conception when its prophets conceived of nature at peace (Isa. xi. 6-10, etc.): and its poets have realized that peace is harmony with the righteous rule of Jehovah (Ps. cxix. 165). The angelic message was "peace upon earth."
- (c) Its privilege is enlightenment. Isaiah saw that the earth should be full of the knowledge of the Lord (Isa. xi. 9), and Jeremiah foresaw the day when the rule of God would be written in the hearts of his subjects (Jer. xxxi. 31-34), which Joel has expanded into the illumination of the Holy Spirit (Joel ii. 28).

The Fellowship of the Mystery

JANUARY 10

"The fellowship of the mystery."—Eph. iii. 9.

Picture: S. Paul the prisoner sharing in the fellowship.

Resolve: to keep daily life in fellowship.

I.—*Paul the prisoner for you Gentiles.*

- (a) The apostle was impeded in his task of preaching among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. But because he was the prisoner of Jesus Christ, and not merely in the hands of man, he found his imprisonment no barrier to God's work. The fellowship may be realized in many ways which only reveal to fellowship that they are the ways of God.
- (b) Instead of fretting or rebelling the apostle through fellowship with the sufferings of Christ unfolded in his life the revelation of God's dealings with him. No writings of the apostle rise to greater heights of spiritual experience than these letters of the Captivity.
- (c) He was prisoner not as a result of any self-will or independence, but "for you Gentiles." His life, while he was partially laid aside, was still in the hand of God. Fellowship made his life a walking with God. He had realized that bonds and imprisonment awaited him (Acts xx. 22-23). He had been promised that he should bear witness in Rome (Acts xxiii. 11), and he was satisfied to do this in the conversion of Onesimus rather than before the person of Nero.

II.—*The mystery.*

- (a) The mystery had been hid in the mind of God: now it was revealed. It is the Epiphany of the purpose of God in creation. In Jesus Christ it is revealed in openness of vision, as in him we have boldness and access with confidence. But to see this revelation is the fruit of fellowship in life; it is the exploring of the unsearchable riches of Christ.
- (b) S. Paul has expressed this experience of the fellowship of the mystery by his frequent insistence upon the reality and the application of life in Christ, the death to self and the living to God in him, the consciousness of the power of Christ more than sufficing for the individual's weakness. He has described the revelation of the gospel as God's power (Rom. i. 16).
- (c) This mystery which is now revealed is in the Church. S. Paul knew of no rivalry between Church life and individual life. Whatever experience of fellowship he enjoyed was to him in the Church. That truth was clear to him because his whole Christian life was the forgetting of himself in the extension of the Church through preaching to the Gentiles.

III.—*Made known by the Church.*

- (a) It is easy to see that the office of the Church is to make Christ known to the world. S. Paul sees a further vocation for the Church; it is to make known to the spiritual sphere the manifold wisdom of God by its life, which is an unfolding of the Eternal purposes of God in Christ Jesus. The first great fact of the Church is its existence. To share in that life, to drink deeply of it, to realize its fellowship, is to enter into the life of Christ.
- (b) Strive to think of the Church as the Epiphany of God's eternal purpose. And here, first, because it is Christ's fellowship with his redeemed of all climes and ages; it is his body. One reason why we have but little experience of fellowship with Christ is because we attach no importance to his Churchly life; and the Sacraments are regarded individually by us, rather than as corporate fellowship.
- (c) The Church is not merely for our sakes. It exists for the glory of God. The Church is not merely that man may glorify God; it is that God may be made manifest in all his wisdom unto principalities and powers in heavenly places. Thus the life of each child of God is to be linked in Christ with the life of every other Christian, and the life of the whole spiritual world.

(For other days before FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY, see pages 93 and 95.)

The Home-Life at Nazareth

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"He went down and was subject unto them."—S. Luke ii. 51.

Picture: the return from Jerusalem to Nazareth.

Pray: for the increase of Christian home life.

I.—*The boy Jesus.*

- (a) He was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him. When he was a child he spake as a child, thought as a child, reasoned as a child. He fulfilled the ideal of childhood, so that at each stage in his growth nothing was wanting to complete the development of mind and character proper to that stage (Swete).
- (b) In this way is to be interpreted the scene in the temple when he was at the age of twelve. Perfect respectfulness and modesty of enquiry and answer, without precocity, but manifesting an interest and an intelligence (S. Luke ii. 47 "understanding"), combined with spiritual perception without self-consciousness. Pray for parents that they may have grace to guide the spiritual lives of children. They may commend them to him who was a child.
- (c) His one word which remains known to us his sense of divine vocation at that age (S. Luke ii. 49). It is the revelation of the deepest secret of a boy's heart, uttered in proper respect and filial affection. He supposed that his interest in this visit to the Temple would be as obvious to the parents as it was natural to himself. "The consciousness of a unique relation to God, and an overmastering enthusiasm for the spiritual and eternal, had begun to overshadow all earthly interests" (Swete).

II.—*The life of subjection.*

- (a) It is immediately after this revelation of the heart of Jesus when a boy that we are made to read that "He went down and was subject unto them." The contrast is startling, and the words in the original sum up the continuous course of life until he was about thirty. The grace of God never prompts to false independence or to disregard of natural obligations.
- (b) In those eighteen years he learned in perfect obedience the discipline of waiting, of limitation, and of the religious training and life which his village surroundings provided. If in his home we cannot forget that he had surroundings of unequalled privilege, yet neither should we forget that there were spiritual limitations to which he submitted, and that in his village life he found the discipline which all youths face in school and neighbourhood.
- (c) And by his example he has given proof that even an unparalleled fellowship with God is compatible with ordinary daily life. The Spirit of God was "opening the mind to the mysteries of God, and at the same time urging the regular discharge of the responsibilities of an obscure and monotonous life" (Swete).

III.—*The home life of Christians.*

- (a) The meagre reference to these thirty years, of which nothing is told us beyond these words, in contrast with the public ministry which fills the larger part of the Gospels, tempts us to forget the first and great lesson of following Christ. Nor does one always remember that even in the public ministry he called very few to leave their natural surroundings, and always delighted in the natural life of home.
- (b) At this season do justice to the Epiphany of youth. In many young lives the Holy Spirit of Jesus is at work, while, however, they are not filled with the Spirit. Hence restlessness, lack of balance, rebellion against divinely imposed constraints, which seem the more to be human opposition because normal homes are not a reproduction of the Nazareth home of Joseph and Mary. Prayer, patience, and gentle sympathy may do much.
- (c) The Epiphany of home, manifested in these thirty years, is strikingly illustrated by the first miracle, which was the blessing of a new home to which he had been invited with his Mother. We suffer to-day from the substitution of individual Christian life for the revelation of the Christian family, from the religion of emotion as the substitution for the religion of duty. Strive to imitate the revelation of these thirty years in your own home.

Obedience

FIRST MONDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"And was subject unto them."—S. Luke ii. 51.

Picture: the life of Jesus Christ in the carpenter's home.

Resolve: to cultivate obedience in conformity with him.

I.—*The virtue of obedience.*

- (a) Our God is a God of order: he obeys his own laws, which are the expression of that which in him corresponds to our virtue of obedience. We may understand this to some degree as we learn to reverence law in nature and in grace. Much which seems hard to us is so because in the disorder of our minds we would continually disobey law if we could. But law is the expression of his unalterable will, the eternal truth of things.
- (b) Consider the habit of Jesus Christ. Though he were Son yet learned he obedience; in his human nature he learned it, although he never disobeyed. He obeyed in the home and in the shop: it is an illumination upon that home that he could always obey there, while yet he could never disobey the perfect will which was in him. But consider, too, how many he obeyed as a child, who were not always considerate, seniors in the village, teachers in the synagogue.
- (c) The discipline of an unruly will gives great emphasis to the virtue of obedience for us. It is not only that I do not always wish to obey in matters of the mere submission of my will, but that it requires great discipline if I am not to disobey in matters of grave import. My will is not merely selfish, it is perverted. If he obeyed, how much more should I!

II.—*The joy of obedience.*

- (a) Think of the unhappiness of self-will. To encourage self-will is to invite unhappiness whenever I cannot have my own will, and that must necessarily often be the case. Consider, too, that the more self-will is indulged, the more imperious and unreasonable are its demands.
- (b) Appreciate the fellowship of life in submitting to one another, and not seeking one's own will. One enters upon a larger life which interprets and expands one's little self. But one cannot thus obey in life, or even see where one's duty lies, if one does not learn obedience and enter into its joy through experiencing that training of the character which is the development of that which God meant me to be.
- (c) There is joy in approaching to some conformity to the ideal of God, of entering into his obedience. Many will not obey who are certain that they would never do what is wrong; obedience seems to them a surrender of manhood. On the other hand, obedience is a great exercise of the will, strengthening it to appreciate the order of God, and to interpret his will. And there is joy in conformity to his will.

III.—*The reward of obedience.*

- (a) A better understanding of Jesus Christ. It was the fundamental law of his life, who was ever engaged upon the Father's will. We wish to understand him, but we cannot if our principles are not his. Many a valuable lesson shall we learn in obedience which will enable us to enter into the heart of Jesus Christ. Often when submission is most difficult we have appreciated afterwards its lessons, and been rewarded for obeying for Jesus Christ's sake.
- (b) For obedience brings much grace to us, and not least the grace to obey God instead of seeking our own will. Consider, too, that humility goes with obedience, and is a special condition of the reception of grace. Consider, further, what a good preparation for one's Communion is the habit of obedience. It prepares a home for Jesus Christ in which he can abide in fellowship, and reveal himself in many secrets to the submissive heart.
- (c) And obedience increases our faith. Conformity to the mind of God is the condition of understanding. And faith is understanding. Therefore, to do a thing without understanding why we are to do it other than because God calls on us to obey him increases our faith. Obedience interprets to us the mind of him whom we obey. Thus obedience extends our spiritual vision by interpreting the mind of God to us.

Jesus and Mary

FIRST TUESDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"How is it that ye sought me?"—S. Luke ii. 49.

"Woman, what have I to do with thee?"—S. John ii. 4.

Picture: Jesus and Mary.

Resolve: to pray (at any rate from Christmas to Septuagesima) for mothers and their growing children.

I.—*The Epiphany gospels.*

- (a) On two successive Sundays we have what may be regarded as checks on the mother's position. We are quite sure that they were not forward or unseemly. And it is not sufficient to say, "But he was God;" for God Incarnate cannot treat his mother other than with true filial devotion.
- (b) No doubt, had we heard them spoken, the very tone would have explained the words. But do we not rather limit the lessons of Epiphany if we think only of the broad facts of the manifestation in the Temple and the manifestation in miracle, and neglect to see the Epiphany of life's progress as it unfolds from infancy to manhood? Here is the development of life, and he has revealed and hallowed it.
- (c) The child in his earliest years has found his full satisfaction in his Mother's confidence. To her he has spoken of his infant prayers and communion with the Father, and she has entered into his experience. Now the time approaches when the child is to become conscious of an independent existence. It is the first serious crisis in the normal life of any child.

II.—*The Temple and the marriage feast.*

- (a) At twelve a Jewish boy realized his individuality through religious association; the period of entire subjection was ended. The child Jesus responded very sensitively to the visit to the Temple, and experienced this development in his human consciousness. Childlike he supposed that his Mother would also be conscious of it.
- (b) The boyhood is now fully alive, and he developed in his human life (S. Luke ii. 52). There was that within him which was beyond the experience and the reach of his Mother. He did not love her the less entirely, that his life was stretching out year by year and preparing for a time when it would be lived away from the home. And he was still subject.
- (c) At the marriage feast at Cana the great break from home was not yet completed. He had entered on his public life by baptism, but had not yet withdrawn from the family circle. This word to his Mother is possibly the first assertion of this new development of life. Henceforth his Mother must not claim him.

III.—*Parents and children.*

- (a) These thoughts, venturesome, yet reverently conceived, unfold the Epiphany of life's growth as hallowed by his experience. One sees in his unfolding of human life the divine will in the normal history of childhood's experience as it slowly advances to manhood's responsibility. To retain the love while not restraining the development is the mother's grace; to gain the confidence while respecting the unfolding individuality is the father's grace.
- (b) Sometimes parents are unmindful of the history of growth, and grieve that they can no longer follow son or daughter in the independent life of responsible judgment and career. With unconscious selfishness they have sought to keep the child always a child, forgetful that each has to live his own life. May the Epiphany of life's development comfort and guide!
- (c) And the same considerations remind, by way of contrast, of the spiritual strain and danger to the unfolding life of forced and self-willed independence, of careless disrespect and disregard of a love which is deeper than the youthful life can fathom. In this season shall we not spare a prayer for the mothers of growing children, and for the young in their lightly realized temptations of mental development?

The Epiphany of Daily Life

FIRST WEDNESDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—Rom. xii. 1.

Picture: a devout Jew bringing his thank-offering to the Temple.

Resolve: the dedication of my daily life to God.

I.—*The Epiphany of daily life.*

- (a) The revelation of Jesus Christ was not only the manifestation of a new religious worship, that of God as Saviour by his thankful subjects, nor yet is it exhausted by a revolution in the conception of the worth of human nature. It must have been appreciated in early days very vitally as the regenerator of common life, transfiguring home and daily duty.
- (b) In the life of our Lord and the teaching of his apostles the practical aspects of Christian life are emphasized; men's duty to society, to government, to the outsider, to the brethren, to work, within the family. Patriotism, responsibility, a useful life, are enjoined.
- (c) The epistles for these Sundays are taken from the practical portion of the most dogmatic argument of S. Paul, that exhortation (Rom. xii.-xv. 13) which was to him the natural outcome of the previous portion: "I beseech you *therefore*." They present to us the Epiphany of Christian daily life, as the gospels present the Epiphany of the Incarnate glory.

II.—*Present your bodies a living sacrifice.*

- (a) Introductory to these lessons of daily life he considers human life as a whole. The language of the verse is sacrificial, and the moment seized for contemplation is that of the presentation of the sacrifice at the altar. Ancient religions were a cultus centring in sacrificial rites. He takes the Christian religion and presents it as a daily practical life offered to God.
- (b) It is the body which he considers as offered, partly because it is the word most suitable to the sacrificial symbolism; but also because it presents the thought of the practical character of the Christian offering: the whole man with the sum total of his powers. It guards against the error of a sentimental religion.
- (c) A living sacrifice, like the heathen or Jewish sacrifices, which were in theory living although the life had been taken (Lev. xvii. 11-14). The sacrifice of life with all its powers in active energy through the death of self. The sacrifice is not the sin-offering, which Christ himself alone could offer, but that of dedication and thanksgiving to God to be consumed on the altar of his holiness, and given back in quickened powers in the sacrificial feast (first prayer in P. B. after Communion).

III.—*Holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

- (a) It is to be free from blemish (Lev. xix. 2). Elsewhere in the epistle he has the same thought associated with the word "living" (Rom. vi. 13). Consider that we do not offer him the vigorous powers of a living body if they be not brought to him holy through the sin-offering of Christ on which this offering rests.
- (b) In the deepest sense even the Jewish sacrifices could not be acceptable to God. The Psalmist saw this (Ps. li. 16, 17), and still more clearly the Christian writer (Heb. x.). The Christian is to be an Enoch in daily life (Heb. xi. 5, R.V.), and to do good and to communicate to his fellow-men (Heb. xiii. 16).
- (c) Man with all his living powers is a rational, spiritual being, and his sacrifice is one which becomes him as such, a sacrifice of the self-dedication of himself with all that is in him (1 Pet. ii. 5). It is the action of the whole verse which is described as a rational, and as a spiritual, service. The Christian, as Chrysostom says, is "the priest of his own body"; and his offering is not external, material, or mechanical.

Fellowship in Unity

FIRST THURSDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"So we being many are one body in Christ."—Rom. xii. 5.

Picture: the unity of the body in many members (verse 4).

Examine yourself in your fulfilment of obligation.

I.—*One body.*

- (a) We share in the sanctity of the Church. Consider the support of this to your life, and how weak your life would be, if it stood by itself and unsupported as the presentation of Christ's ideal. Each member shares in all the wealth that is stored up in the Church. We are members of the richest corporation in existence.
- (b) We share in the weakness of the Church. The Church is always being subjected to misunderstanding, because her principles differ from those of the world. Further than this we must remember that the Church, while a spiritual society, is composed partly of members who are not faultless. And it is just this part of the Church that the world and ourselves see. We must bear the reproach of her failures, remembering that Christ is not ashamed to call *us* brethren.
- (c) We share in the responsibility of the Church. Her responsibility is Godward both with regard to herself and to the world. Her first duty is to uphold the standard of God before the eyes of the world by her life which manifests the riches of his gifts. The Church is before all things sacramental and supernatural. It is a great responsibility to share in this life.

II.—*Many members.*

- (a) Appreciate the office of others; whether of the Church in other countries, or of the other members in one's own country. Do not be unmindful of Europe. And whenever you pray with the Church at the Holy Sacrifice for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here in earth, for grace for all bishops and those who have the care of souls, and for all God's people, remember consciously that you are praying not merely for England or for the Anglican communion.
- (b) Avoid dwelling on one's own defects. It is always dispiriting, and not least so when they are the defects which come most nearly home, because they are the defects of one's own part of the Church. Whatever grace each one has received, it has come to him through his portion of the Church, while yet it has been the grace of the whole Church.
- (c) Let each several member fulfil his office. This is the profitable consideration. The variety of members corresponds to the variety of the calls; and the variety composes a unity. Failure of the individual weakens the effective power of the whole.

III.—*Many members in one body.*

- (a) There are, therefore, mutual obligations. As each shares in the fulness of the whole, so must each share one another's burdens, and bear with one another's infirmities. Remember that others bear with you, and strengthen you by their prayers.
- (b) Fellowship in prayer and worship. The corporate life helps our infirmities. The prayer and worship of the individual reaches God through the Church. Realize this fulness of life and be strengthened to persevere by reason of its support. Never presume to think that you have nothing to contribute.
- (c) United service. The service is one. Whoever is faithfully doing his duty is holding up the hands of all other labourers. The mother who is serving Christ in the large family of children is supporting the Religious in their life of celibacy. The missionary on his isolated station is supporting the Christian workman at home in his factory. All is one in the Church.

Jesus Lost

FIRST FRIDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"And when they found him not."—S. Luke ii. 45.

Picture: the company returning from Jerusalem.

Resolve: some act of recollection.

I.—*How the loss arose.*

- (a) On leaving the Temple. There is danger in thinking that if we have begun the day in prayer we must be safe, and of looking upon our devotions as a duty to be "got through" and then put away. We must not leave the Temple unless we are sure that we are taking him with us.
- (b) In the bustle of getting off. Give time to fix the fruits of communion, meditation and prayer. Remember the resolution made at meditation, the grace asked at Communion, the thing prayed for this morning. Make a calm recollected exit from this devotional presence of God: contrast the gossip after Church in many congregations, which quite scatters the impression of the service.
- (c) In the plans to meet friends and kinsfolk of Nazareth, that we may travel together. Often, through distracting thoughts, the day's plans engage the mind during devotions, rather than that the hour of devotion fortifies one to keep him with us throughout the day, whether in labour or in recreation.

II.—*The finding of the loss.*

- (a) They took it for granted at first that he was there. Thus we may go through a day without missing him, simply because we have supposed that he was with us, and we have not wanted to speak to him.
- (b) Supposing him to be in the company. What will it benefit us if he be with our friends but not with ourselves! We "suppose"; but we do not take pains to see that he is with us. It is not enough for our devotional life that our friends are good Christians. Our life needs personal religion.
- (c) In the evening he was missed. Happy if we do miss him at night, in the examination! But why did we not miss him at the midday recollection, or at the hourly ejaculation, or at the recalling of the resolution made at the morning's meditation, or at the periodical act of intention? We shall be happy if we do not take three days to find him.

III.—*Consider the search.*

- (a) They had to go back to Jerusalem. When Christ is lost there is nothing to be done but to go back to Jerusalem, to his house, to the house of bread. It is some test of our progress whether we miss him quickly, and a good test of our reality whether we return promptly to Jerusalem, or look about for him in the company of our friends.
- (b) The value of knowing where to find him. We shall find him in the Temple, in his Father's house, about his Father's business. We shall not find him in distraction and frivolity, in hard work, or in misery and solitude. We must return whence we have strayed from him. Thank God that we know what to do when we lose him.
- (c) They sought him sorrowing. With them it was the sorrow of anxiety for him. When we lose him through distraction, carelessness, lack of devotion, there will be sorrow for our own loss, if we have learned the fellowship of his society.

Judgment by the Son of Man

FIRST SATURDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man."—S. John v. 27.

Picture: the manifestation of the Son in human nature in the day of judgment.

Pray: "In the hour of death and in the day of judgment, good Lord, deliver us."

I.—*His visibility.*

- (a) No man can see God at any time. The pure in heart see him, but they see him in their purity of heart, not with their bodily eyes. The ungodly can never see God, even in the day of judgment.
- (b) But God manifest in the Son of Man is seen by all. "And every eye shall see him." His Incarnation has made him visible: his Resurrection and Ascension have made his Godhead manifest through his human nature.
- (c) The sight of that Son of Man will be the judgment. There will be no need to dispute or prove. Each man will be self-condemned or will range himself on his side. Some by the power of his own life in them he will attract: others will shrink away from the sight.

II.—*Because he is the Son of Man.*

- (a) Man is to be judged by his peer. Judgment is committed into the hand of the Son because he is partaker of human nature. As the Incarnation is the assurance to us of divine sympathy and understanding, so judgment from the Son of Man will be assurance of the divine justice.
- (b) For the manifestation of the Son of Man will be itself the judgment. It will be the revelation of what man was to become in him. And further there will be with him in the company of the saints the fulfilment of his purpose. What they have become in him others have come short of (2 Thess. i. 9, 10).
- (c) The judgment is the converse of quickening (S. John v. 21, 22): there is no additional sentence to be pronounced. The eternal judgment is the lack of quickening life, which he was manifested to vouchsafe. The sting of the final judgment will be the clear perception in his revealed Person of that quickening which he was manifested to grant, and which has been refused.

III.—*Authority to judge.*

- (a) God the Father has the prerogative of judgment. He has given it to the Incarnate Son, whom he sent into the world. From the Father's side he came, as One commissioned: from the Father's side he will come to judge the quick and the dead. The Son can do nothing of himself.
- (b) The judgment bears relation to his Passion, which was the outcome of his Incarnation. He has received the world's judgment in his Person: the world in judging him judged itself. In that day when "they also which pierced him" shall see the marks of his Passion, the world's judgment of him will return upon itself, and the world will stand self-condemned.
- (c) The divine judgment through the Son has already been expressed in his Resurrection. "Whom they slew and hanged on a tree, him God raised up the third day: it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead" (Acts x. 39-42). The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the divine judgment of the world's condemnation of him.

The Obedience of the Servants

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"*They filled them up to the brim.*"—S. John ii. 7.

Picture: the village wedding feast.

Resolve: to watch the spirit of my obedience to Christ.

I.—*The servant's obedience.*

- (a) It was literal. He bade them fill the water pots, and they filled them. Literal obedience is not opposed to obeying in spirit, it is an aspect of spiritual obedience. Obedience to be of the heart hearty, should be literal. Such literal obedience respects the wisdom of the authority, and manifests the subservience of the servant.
- (b) It was prompt. A servant of Christ has no right to dally over obedience as though he were not obeying but were condescending to assist. And often for us this is the only safe course. One can always obey promptly; afterwards one can think about the difficulty. And prompt obedience expresses the respect which is due to authority.
- (c) It was unquestioning. The order to the servants had a semblance of unreality about it; and his right to give the order might have been questioned. But his manner of giving the order inspired confidence in him, and unquestioning obedience is always an evidence of confidence in the authority. So far as we trust God we obey him.

II.—*Results of obedience.*

- (a) They became fellow-workers with God. There is no other way of becoming a fellow-worker with him. The Son himself has revealed this law: "I must do the work of him that sent me." "Lo! I am come to do thy will, O God." "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." But the servants did not know that they were fellow-workers with God, and therefore about to assist in a miracle.
- (b) They became a source of joy and blessing to others. We do more than we know when we obey; and only by obedience can we be a source of joy and blessing to others. For all joy and blessing come from God. If we would serve our fellow-man we must learn to serve God and we shall serve him through the service of God.
- (c) They became a means of manifesting forth his glory. It is written, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father." Much pretended service of man is disqualified by a desire that one's good works may cause men to glorify us.

III.—*Apply these thoughts to S. Paul.*

- (a) Apply them to his conversion. At this crisis of his life how literal, prompt and unquestioning was his obedience. And did ever conversion bring like glory to God? Who has ever dared to praise S. Paul for his conversion? And was ever conversion more fruitful in the service of man?
- (b) Apply to his ministry. See how the results of his obedience were manifested in his life. He became through his obedience a fellow-worker with God, yet always as his bond-servant, loyally devoted to his service. His life was one long source of joy and blessing to others, and throughout it he manifested forth God's glory.
- (c) Apply to his teaching. His exposition of faith is not its substitution for obedience or for active service. Faith is confidence issuing in the obedience of self-surrender, and realized in the fellowship of service.

Knowledge of his Will through Obedience

SECOND MONDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"But the servants which drew the water knew."—S. John ii. 9.

Picture: the scene; and Jesus and Mary are present and his disciples.

- Resolve: to do his will that thou mayest know the revelation of his power.

I.—*The servants.*

- (a) They were very subordinate. The bridegroom, the ruler of the feast, the invited guests were all people of consideration. But the servants were merely part of the routine of work. Yet when he began to manifest forth his glory it was they whom he chose as his ministers, while yet not taking them out of their place, but using them for their proper work.
- (b) The company of guests includes the nucleus of the Church that is to be manifested; there is Jesus himself, and his Mother and his disciples. His will is supreme, while yet he refuses not the intercessions of his Mother. It is she who draws his attention to the need, who needed not, nevertheless, that any one should tell him. But his manner of meeting the necessity is his own.
- (c) And he chooses ~~to~~ use the most obvious and yet the most unostentatious means. He turns to the servants, and they quietly do his bidding. It was not theirs to question why? or by whose authority? It was theirs to obey without question. It is an Epiphany of the spirit of service in the Church.

II.—*Which drew the water.*

- (a) They obeyed, they fulfilled their duty, and the revelation came through their service. They knew not what they were doing when they filled the water pots; but as they poured out unquestioningly the water, they knew that the wine was one with the water. Oh, blessed result of unquestioning obedience!
- (b) If we would have Jesus manifest forth his glory, if we would see common life transformed into the best wine, it must be by obedience, and the obedience must be given to him. The revelation which sanctifies and transfigures common life must come through humble service.
- (c) They knew. Others wondered, but the servants knew. Blessed is that knowledge of his doing which comes never from hearsay or from study, but from obedience and service. Wouldest thou know the doctrine? Then do his will, and thou shalt know.

III.—*Water and wine.*

- (a) As the Blessed Sacrament is the revelation of his power, and transmutates the weakness of water into the richness of wine, so too it reveals the transmutation of common life into the hallowed fellowship of communion with him. But only to those who obey him in the service of daily duty.
- (b) Throughout his public ministry he was continually training his disciples to realize the sacramental elevation of common life. Twice he multiplied bread, breaking it and giving thanks as at the last Supper. It seems as if he had a distinctive manner of their breaking and blessing, for after his Resurrection he was made known by breaking the bread (S. Luke xxiv. 30, 31).
- (c) And at his first manifestation of his glory he took the common water of household use and converted it into wine for festival consumption. And as with the multiplication of the bread he chose to distribute it through the disciples, multiplying it in their hands, so here he worked through the servants, performing his miracle through their instrumentality. Service is thus sanctified by obedience. And it was his glory that was manifested forth, not theirs. The obedience which knows is the servant's obedience, for the servant serves for the Master's glory.

Church Life

SECOND TUESDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us."—Rom. xii. 6.

Picture: a local Christian Church as a community with diverse gifts for the benefit of the whole.

Resolve: to be more mindful of the responsibility of Church membership.

I.—*Church life a responsibility.*

- (a) As members of the whole body we share in the life of all (Rom. xii. 4, 5). Do not think much of your own incapacity or uselessness; you are not the whole body. Nor underestimate your usefulness; the life of the whole body flows through you, as you are part of the whole. Only fear lest by withholding the dedication of yourself to God as regards any part of your being you impede the usefulness which you might have.
- (b) There is responsibility to fulfil your function in order that the life may be healthy throughout. Your gifts may be small, but they belong nevertheless to the whole body, and are not for yourself. As you receive the life of the body, so, invigorated by its life, let your gifts be used for the body. An inactive member weakens the life of the Church.
- (c) This responsibility is realized in the local unit. Each Christian belongs to a local church, which reproduces in miniature the life of the whole. It is given to very few to influence the whole Church directly, but each one has gifts for his own local church, and each healthy local church influences a wider range. Remember the man with the one talent.

II.—*Church life.*

- (a) There is a deep selfishness in our Church life which paralyses its power. Each lives for himself, to get all he can spiritually from the Church for his own edification: we do not think enough of the life of the community. But the gift dies within us which is not passed on through the influence of holiness, prayer, sympathy.
- (b) And hence the false division in our minds between priests and laity, as though the former were in some special sense the Church. S. Paul has just reminded us that we are to offer living sacrifices to God of all our powers, the local church is to be our sphere of daily ministry.
- (c) For the proper understanding of this we must give a wide conception to the life of the Church. The Church is the body of the faithful. In the Christian home the sacramental life of the communicant is to pass out in sacramental powers to children and servants. Are they not members of the body? In neighbourly intercourse Church member is to meet Church member as Church member.

III.—*Gifts according to grace given.*

- (a) Many a life is stunted because it does not see any work to do, and does not see work because it does not realize the membership. To one is given one grace, to another another; to comparatively few does he give grace for what in our narrow conceptions we call specially Church work. A few may teach, exhort, minister, distribute, give. All must pray for the Church, be kindly affectioned with love of the brethren, be liberal and distribute as God has given to each.
- (b) Responsibility is the injunction of S. Paul here. What is given to a member to do he is to do well, according to the way in which it should be done. He is ministering a grace that has been given him; and he cannot treat the inspirations and gifts of the Holy Ghost lightly. Nor may he go beyond those gifts, but must act according to the proportion of faith.
- (c) One great ministry to the Church is the gift of the Holy Spirit to every member in the sanctification of life, and the exercise of the grace of his sacramental endowments. The influence of life and prayer (and the two cannot be separated) is greater than the influence of words (see vers. 9-12).

The Riches of Christ

SECOND WEDNESDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"The riches of the glory of this mystery . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."—Col. i. 27.

Consider Moses (Heb. xi. 26), and contrast him with the revelation given to Christians.

Resolve : some application directed towards appreciation of the riches of Christ which are bestowed on you.

I.—*The riches of the Person of Christ.*

- (a) The Beloved : the Only Begotten Son, in whom the good pleasure of the eternal Father always rests ; he, too, through whom all things were made : who sustains all things : he is also the heir of all things. Consider such riches ; and then, that through him it is that Almighty God has been pleased to speak to us.
- (b) And in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Understood simply what a surpassing truth it is ! No wonder that man's understanding staggers, and that any escape from its literal truth is eagerly grasped at. Starting from a man like us, men are ready to use any expressions of honour which leaves Christ as only in degree more divine than ourselves, rather than marvelling at the condescension of him, who, although he were rich, yet for our sakes became poor, stooping to our humanity, and so raising it to union with his riches.
- (c) "He hath highly exalted him." He has won in his Incarnate Person a yet higher possession of that which is already his as Son and Heir. This exaltation is inseparably associated with his Church, which indeed may very well be S. Paul's thought in the adoption of the word "bodily" (Col. ii. 9).

II.—*The riches of grace in him.*

- (a) We are accepted in the Beloved : see Eph. i. 6, R.V. Our first share in the fruitfulness of the riches of his Person is this acceptance, freely bestowed. "The head and the body is one Christ. The head satisfied for the members, Christ for his vitals" (S. Bernard). S. Paul repeatedly dwells upon the chief Christian mystery as being "Christ in you." When we consider, as now, his riches, we ought not to wonder that he calls this mystery "the hope of glory."
- (b) Found in him (Phil. iii. 9). The words look to the great finding, but they imply a being found now in him by reason of his keeping ; the riches of his glory suffice to strengthen us with might by his Spirit in the inner man (Eph. iii. 16, 17) against the temptation which assails, the pleasure which may take one off balance, the sorrow which may unhinge, the natural sloth which is opposed to perseverance.
- (c) Grow up into him in all things (Eph. iv. 15) : a progressive advance through his safe conduct. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 19). The law of life is progress ; progress by the increasing setting free of life from its bondage of restraint for the development of his life in us. Such are some of the riches of this glorious mystery which God has been pleased by an act of grace to make known.

III.—*Some laws of the riches of this mystery.*

- (a) "Grace for grace." Consider the necessity of drawing upon grace : it is the law of continual supply without squandering. It is like the widow's oil, unlimited in supply so long as there was a vessel to be filled which her faithful obedience had provided. We may picture how cautiously she began to pour out at first, until she realized the nature of the liberality ; then with what increasing confidence she filled vessel after vessel.
- (b) "Draw out now and bear." By not drawing out we deprive the Master of the commendation in S. John ii. 10. The vessels are filled to be emptied for others, not to evaporate. It is the law of living for others, which is a primary law of grace.
- (c) Earthly possessions tend to lose their attraction with loss of novelty : not so in the sphere of grace. God's riches are progressively appreciated, for they educate the heart to value them. Go on fearlessly, using and demanding : the hope expands, the dawning glory grows brighter. It is the law of development.

The Manifestation of Christ in Prayer

SECOND THURSDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"The life was manifested."—1 S. John i. 2. *"But he withdrew himself into the deserts and prayed."*—S. Luke v. 16 (R.V.).

Picture: our blessed Lord spending a night in prayer (S. Luke vi. 12).

Resolve: to bring prayer more to bear upon daily life.

I.—*The prayers of Jesus Christ.*

- (a) The habit of a lifetime. The daily life was over-crowded (see S. Mark iii. 20, vi. 31, 56, S. Luke v. 15, etc.); but he, the Son of God, must have time for prayer. So he used to withdraw from time to time (so says the Greek) into the deserts for prayers. Think of him in prayer and it will raise our conception of prayer. And he was manifested to be the rule of life for Christians.
- (b) Prayer in his case lacked one main element of ours; no personal confession of sin with petition for pardon. But prayer was the breath of his life; prayer as speech, fellowship, between the Father and his Son. Here is a manifestation for the sons of God. How often only the need of forgiveness rouses us from the formality of prayer into a reality.
- (c) For this speaking to his Father he withdrew himself. There was concentration in his prayers, and he must be alone. In Holy Week he bivouaced at night on the Mount of Olives (S. Luke xxi. 37; probably Gethsemane was his oratory (S. John xviii. 2; cp. S. Luke xi. 1). Do we thus withdraw? Have we an oratory which, when need arises, we can turn into a Gethsemane? How long can we spend in prayer?

II.—*"The life was manifested."*

- (a) Mark the union between work and prayer; each is fellowship; and the two are not rivals, but aspects of the one life. He passed from one to the other, the wilderness and the public places alternated. Work prayed out, prayer lived. Prayer is the manifestation of the will of God to one whose life has been given to God that he may do his will.
- (b) Prayer implies mission. "Lo, I am come to do thy will" explains the prayers of Christ. Prayer is the appreciation of life as a commission from God. "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" lies at one end; "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," at the other.
- (c) The fellowship of a commissioned life sees the future and the invisible; in the details it sees the eternal principle; in the small things of to-day it sees the unfolding of the mighty will of God. Prayer rises into the aspiration of life; it satisfies the life which active duties and daily work cannot adequately express. Work comes short, always in some degree disappoints; prayer is the ideal execution. Prayer elevates.

III.—*"He withdrew himself."*

- (a) He who used to withdraw teaches us the true spirit of prayer. Once he broke in with, "I thank thee that thou hast heard me"; Once in a hostile crowd, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father?" Once in the midst of a discourse he prayed, "Save me from this hour." The unity of the life of prayer; we do not always retire when we wish to pray, for God is in all our work; but we do retire often, and in order that we may not lose the power to pray at all times.
- (b) He withdrew himself. Do we withdraw ourselves when we withdraw? There is distraction in prayer which arises from oneself, because so much of the external life is not blent with prayer. Distraction is often due to the disharmony of life; conquer it by making life the doing of his will. But for this you must lay all your life before him in prayer that you may perceive life's commission.
- (c) Take therefore a wide view of prayer: it is fellowship between the Father and the commissioned son, who is to fulfil his will. In prayer include meditation, thinking upon his service, the devout interpretation of work, renewed consecration of life, realization of his presence, etc. Prayers pass into prayer, prayer into "Be still and know that I am God." "Commune with your own heart in your chamber and be still."

The Manifestation of Christ in Prayer

SECOND FRIDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"The life was manifested."—1 S. John i. 2. *"I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."*—S. Luke xxii. 32.

Consider: our blessed Lord's prayers while on earth.

Resolve: to pay more heed to the character and range of Christ's prayers.

I.—Consider some of the occasional prayers of Christ.

- (a) The Baptism (S. Luke iii. 21), before choosing the twelve (S. Luke vi. 12, 13), before giving the Pater Noster (S. Luke xi. 1), after feeding the five thousand (S. Matt. xiv. 23), before the Petrine confession (S. Luke ix. 18), at the Transfiguration (S. Luke ix. 29), at the mission of the seventy (S. Luke x. 18, 21); for S. Peter (S. Luke xxii. 32), the prayer that the cup may be removed (S. Matt. xxvi. 36 ff.). Learn the practical application of prayer.
- (b) Prayer is not only for the weak and erring; *he* prayed at the opening of his public ministry, before exercising a grave responsibility, after the multitude would have come by force to make him king (S. John vi. 15), etc. And *he* prayed before his Passion and on the death of S. John Baptist (S. Matt. xiv. 13). Prayer is the expression of life in fellowship with God.
- (c) Consider that these prayers include yourself. Apply S. John xvii. 20 to some of these occasional prayers. Each baptized person has his part in the prayer between the Baptism and the descent of the Holy Ghost. Every true confession of Jesus Christ in daily life is an answer to his prayer before the confession of S. Peter. Every good communion is a fruit of his prayer after feeding the five thousand (S. John vi. 22 ff.; S. Matt. xiv. 23).

II.—Consider the wide range of his prayers.

- (a) The choice of the apostles; "I can do nothing of myself." Mark the apparent failure of prayer: Judas, and in a degree S. Peter, and all the disciples. What we call failure is an aspect of incomplete view. See the wider range; every Christian minister has his share in this prayer; a veritable apostolic succession.
- (b) The Transfiguration. It was the prayer before revealing to us the essential connection between his deace and his glory (S. Luke ix. 31). Every child of God is trying to enter into the manifestation of the Passion as the road to glory, the revelation of the suffering Son of God (cp. Acts xvii. 3; xiv. 22). It is only possible through much prayer. He has prayed for thee on the Mount to see the transfigured glory of himself in relation to his Passion (S. Matt. xvi. 21, 24; S. Luke ix. 44).
- (c) Christ prayed and then came the confession, "The Christ of God." It is his prayer which upholds the Christian's faith. He prayed before calming the storm at sea (S. John vi. 15 ff.); with him in the ship the Church does not fear the storms of the world. Be bold churchmen; the faith is not dying out; he has prayed. Do we pray for the Church as he did, her ministry, her prayers, her sacraments?

III.—The encouragement of the prayers of Christ.

- (a) The life manifested is a revelation of the range of prayer for Christians. Learn of him, not only to study his prayers but to be upheld in prayer by him. He gave us a prayer, and prayed first. We use that prayer as the rule of all prayer, "Hallowed be thy Name"; "Thy will be done"; "Thy Kingdom come." The prayer included your life of prayer in its spirit; we live in the shadow of his prayers. Learn from this the inspiration of prayer.
- (b) Apply these thoughts of his prayers while on earth (that our faith fail not) to his present intercession in heaven. He both bestows grace upon us to pray aright, and in him; and he also presents our prayers in his own Person to God the Father. Then let there be boldness in besieging heaven's gate, and in facing life.
- (c) Mark again that prayer is one side of life. Why all these prayers of Christ? He did not pray for success, as men judge; he prayed that the will of the Father be done. See again S. John xvii. "I have glorified Thee," "manifested thy name," etc. "And all mine are thine." It seems an impossible standard for our lives; yet "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

The Manifestation of Christ in Prayer

SECOND SATURDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"The life was manifested."—1 S. John i. 2. "My times are in thy hand."—Ps. xxxi. 15 (A.V.).

Picture: Jesus Christ working out the Father's plan in the fellowship of prayer. "Father, the hour is come."

Pray: for grace to use your life as portioned out by God.

I.—The Prayers of Christ in S. John.

- (a) Ejaculatory prayers. "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me" (xi. 41; cp. S. Mark vii. 34). "Father, save me from this hour: Father, glorify thy name" (xii. 27, 28). That which with him was the natural expression of a life consciously realized at each moment as in communion with the Father must be with us the practice which will enable us so to realize and so live.
- (b) It also reveals to us his devotion to the House of prayer (see S. John ii. 17): we see him again and again in the temple, at the Passover (ii. 13), at an uncertain feast (v. 1) at the Tabernacles (vii.), at the Dedication (x. 22, 23). It was the expression of fellowship both with the glory of God and with his fellow-worshippers. The retirements, the ejaculations, and the public worship, are elements of the unity of life in fellowship.
- (c) Almost confined to this gospel is the emphasis upon prayer "in my name" (xiv. 13, 14; xv. 16; xvi. 23-26; cp. S. Matt. xviii. 20). Consider the words in relation to the thoughts of our fellowship with him in our prayers, and the harmony of active life and prayer. Thus to pray at all "Forgive us our trespasses" is to pray in Christ's name; nor can we pray this unless we also forgive (S. Matt. vi. 14, 15).

II.—The life of prayer in S. John.

- (a) Life is to be the spirit and expression of one's prayers. "The Son can do nothing of himself." "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "I am come in my Father's name." "I live by the Father." "The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him."
- (b) The confidence of prayer. One long prayer is recorded; it breathes the spirit of sonship, the clear consciousness of doing his will, the knowledge of his will. Of us S. John has said that "we have fellowship with the Father"; and a clear consciousness of a will set upon God gives great boldness of speech with God.
- (c) Learn to pray with Christ; he seeks this (xvii. 24), and will reveal his glory to such. "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you" (xv. 7). And this relationship is based on his choice; for "ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (xv. 16).

III.—My times are in thy hand.

- (a) This gospel dwells particularly upon "his hour" (see ii. 4; vii. 6, 30; xii. 23; xiii. 1), and also in relation to his prayers; "Save me from this hour"; "the hour is come." It is the divine ordering and guidance of life; and the realization of this is in the life directed by prayer.

"Father, I know that all my life
Is portioned out for me;

But I ask thee for a present mind
Intent on pleasing thee."

- (b) Mark the quiet strength of such a life of divine guardianship, realized through waiting upon God, conscious of his over-ruling guidance, perceiving life's vocation, living within the sphere of his will, life and prayer harmonizing. He has said, "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest" even now, in labour, anxiety and disappointment; rest in prayer and in activity, for "My times are in thy hand."
- (c) God is the God of patience; our times are in his hand, we too can wait in each matter for the "hour." Consider the secret of impatience with self, with events, with evil: we have not realized as might be the ordered life of fellowship; our restless wills would choose the hour. But the life was manifested that we might live in the power of him who died to be our life.

The Submission of Faith

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only."—S. Matt. viii. 8.

Picture: the centurion and the Nazarene carpenter.

Pray: for submission in faith.

I.—*Faith and submission.*

- (a) Faith is easily counterfeited. Submission to the inevitable is not always in the disposition of faith; to submit to God when the natural mind strongly urges resistance, and when one can resist, this is an evidence of faith. Many a battle has to be fought out here in the spiritual world, first in the lower regions of life, learning to live by the grace of God and not by independence, and then in higher regions of grace.
- (b) We do not know whether to be more astonished at the centurion's faith or his humility. It requires faith to be humble, and our Lord rightly commended his faith. Why did the centurion regard himself inferior to the provincial Jew, so as to be unworthy to receive him? Truly the spirit bloweth where it listeth; but it is of man to respond, and where submission involves an act of humility the victory of grace is great.
- (c) We may contrast the centurion with the Hebrews at Mount Sinai, as representative of the two Covenants of law and of grace. Under the former the chosen people prayed that they might hear the divine commands through Moses and that God might not speak to them lest they should die (Exod. xx. 19): under the latter a Gentile prays for a word which shall suffice to heal his boy at a distance. And we may see an illustration of Epiphany-tide: "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel."

II.—*In the light of the Incarnation.*

- (a) The true significance of the Christian revelation is often evaded on account of its overwhelming condescension. We would keep the gift of the adoption of human nature into God external to us. That Christ became man, lived for us, died for us, we are ready to accept; but when we realize that the truth is "Christ with you," "Christ in you," we say: "I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof."
- (b) If this seems at all exaggerated, it may be studied in an application, in relation to the laws of grace. "Speak the word only" is often the heart's search after forgiveness; we face the truth that repentance is not identical with remission of sins, that the word of healing must be said. Yet many a time have we prefaced this prayer for healing with a self-deprecatory, "I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof," not regarding that Christian forgiveness is identical with restored fellowship.
- (c) But there is a true humility of contrition which finds a fitting correspondence in these words, knowing far better to whom we address them than did the Centurion, and which boldly throws itself upon the liberality of the divine grace manifested in the gift of the Son. "Not worthy. Yea, thou knowest: deeply unworthy; all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags; but speak the cleansing word; make thereby a habitation fit for thyself within my heart, who dwellest in the high and holy place, and with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit."

III.—*Apply also to the Holy Communion.*

- (a) Does there never seem a presumption in communicating, if one have high views of this sacred mystery? Is it not more reverent to communicate very rarely? But in spiritual matters modesty is best seen in obedience, and not in self-assertion. "Be it unto me according to thy word," is the modesty which received the announcement of divine maternity.
- (b) But what better approach can the sinner make to this gift of God than "I am not worthy; yet come. Speak the word within my heart, and it shall be open to welcome thee." We know the gift of God and who it is that saith to us in our communions, "Give me to drink." Ask, then, of him liberally.
- (c) Consider what degree of intimacy is implied in this, that one so exalted should visit the house of the humble: for unless the intimacy be very close, how can such visits be? The King of kings does not visit strangers, but seeks to be received with honour as a loving guest whose visit is cherished.

The Church and the World

THIRD MONDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men."—Rom. xii. 17.

Picture: Jesus Christ in the carpenter's shop.

Resolve: daily prayer to support our fellow-Christians in the world of work.

I.—*The world and the Church.*

- (a) A strongly marked contrast in those days. The life of the people was dominated by tradition and national associations, including the religious element; individuality and independence of public opinion had little scope. On the other side lay an insignificant society, violently opposed to many accepted principles of the world, and behaving in such a way as to incur the suspicion of being disloyal, irreligious and unsocial.
- (b) But now the distinction between the world and the Church seems very vague. Many centuries of Christianity have influenced the world, and much which compelled the early Christians to stand aloof has passed away. In theory the greater portion of the English world accepts the morals of Christianity, and does not practise them. The Christian has to practise the teaching of his Master and so to interpret him in his life that the world may be converted.
- (c) The world has entered very much into the Church; and the Christian too often does not realize his responsibility, because the general standard of Church life is lowered. He is tempted to regard the faithful Christians as reaching beyond what is required.

II.—*The Church's witness before the world.*

- (a) In lamenting the state of the world, we may be murmuring against God instead of making the practical reflection that it is the duty of Christians to manifest Christ before the world. The world makes the Church conform to it, because the Church does not transform the world. "Let your light so shine before men, that . . . they may glorify your Father which is in heaven."
- (b) This witness is chiefly that of sanctified daily life. The witness of speech is of little force, unless Christ be challenged. The witness of everyday life is very convincing. If the Christian is to provide things honest in the sight of all men, the power which he claims as a member of Christ must be manifested in the life which the world sees, by a standard which the world confesses is not of her spirit.
- (c) Such witness-bearing of the illumination of human life in its daily duties through the Incarnation, will infallibly bring home to the Christian the difference between the world and the Church. Consider what responsibility there is for Christians to support one another in fellowship under this strain. A faithful Christian cannot be hidden in the world: "Ye are seen as luminaries in the world" (Phil. ii. 15, R.V. margin).

III.—*The burden of the Church in the world.*

- (a) The burden of endurance. The epistle treats of a responsibility which begins with living peaceably, and which necessarily involves endurance of wrong, forgiveness of those who wrong us, and in such manifest degree as to lead to the overcoming of evil by the force of the good.
- (b) The burden of convincing worth. The superiority of Christian life is its force: the Christian is to provide things convincingly good in the eyes of all. This applies also to his work. He is to be "not slothful in business," who professes to be serving a master, whose demand is not an additional duty, but the proper fulfilment of all duties.
- (c) Consider therefore the duty of the Church to support one another by intercession in this great office of bearing Christ before the world. Especially should those who lead sheltered lives pray earnestly for those who represent the Church in workshops and offices, etc. Our business men and women, our workmen, are the greatest evidence of Christ to the world, and the chief missionaries of the Church.

A Righteousness of God

THIRD TUESDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"For therein is revealed a righteousness of God."—Rom. i. 17 (R.V.).

Picture: S. Paul's emotions when he wrote, "I am not ashamed of the gospel," as manifested in his exposition of it in this epistle, and in his life of sufferings and labours.

Pray: that you may never forget that the Kingdom of God is righteousness.

I.—*"A righteousness of God."*

- (a) God is righteous. A solemn thought: are we never in danger of persuading ourselves that he is kind, or pious, rather than righteous? Moreover, because righteous, it is impossible that there should be any unrighteousness in him. By "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. xviii. 25) is meant that if a thing is wrong God *cannot* do it.
- (b) The word for "righteousness" is closely connected in Greek with the words translated "justification." In the gospel is revealed a justification, a state of righteousness before God, which is his gift. In the state of grace, to which in the gospel we are admitted, righteousness is "reckoned" (Rom. iv. 6, 11; cp. 22 and 24 (R.V.)). And this reckoning reveals also the righteousness of God, for Christ was set forth to declare God's righteousness, "that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26).
- (c) We must look to the end of justification, which is "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14). The purpose for which mankind is redeemed is that we may stand without fault before him. The end of every Christian is that he shall be a saint. Only saints are in heaven.

II.—*"Revealed."*

- (a) That is, unveiled. God's righteousness was always there, and all that reveals him must reveal this. The history of the world is the unveiling of his righteousness. But this was not always seen. There was as it were a veil before men's eyes until his Son manifested him in holiness and unveiled his essence before us.
- (b) So too the gospel was always in God's purposes. It is no change in God: it reveals what he is and wills, not what he is become. God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him (Eph. i. 4, R.V. marg.).
- (c) This is being unveiled continuously in the Church, which is the manifestation of his holiness. The Church *is* this unveiling to those who see in it the Bride of Christ. It is the revelation of righteousness in a sinful world; it is the storehouse of the gifts and graces of righteousness in which the members are sanctified and brought to perfection.

III.—*"Therein."*

- (a) In the gospel, of which S. Paul is not ashamed. Consider the gospel broadly, as the great revelation of righteousness, and there is nothing to be ashamed of in it, but only of our own unworthiness and misrepresentation of it. Do not substitute for the gospel any narrow or humanly devised scheme for getting saved in sin. The gospel is "in Christ": who is the righteousness of God, and our righteousness.
- (b) But the gospel is rather the revelation of God to man not as a scheme, but as a life, a mystical life of Christ. We do not live on a doctrine, even of justification by faith: the doctrine is only the intellectual expression of a verity which is realized in the experience of life in Christ our righteousness. No scheme can give life: God only in the offer of himself can do this, and this offer is indeed a gospel, a good tidings.
- (c) The Church is the concrete expression of this life, in Christ, which justifies and makes righteous through the righteousness of God. And if the Christian revelation were a forgiveness which declined one degree from the eternal holiness of God it could not be his, and so could not give life.

Just and the Justifier

THIRD WEDNESDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"That he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."—Rom. iii. 26.

Picture: the triumph of God in the great day, when he will be justified by all his works.

Pray: for grace to understand something of the manifold wisdom of God.

I.—Consider justification.

- (a) Justification must take its rise out of Jesus Christ: there can be no justification, in which God himself is just, that ignores the fact of sin. Jesus Christ has dealt adequately with sin on our behalf before God; therefore in him alone is the possibility of being accounted just before God.
- (b) Justification must be *in* Jesus Christ: that is, its first stage is in Baptism. There can be no righteousness on God's part by merely accepting the condemnation of sin in Jesus Christ apart from ourselves. But through our baptism the life of Jesus Christ is in us, and this is the life which is to grow in us until we are entirely conformed to his likeness.
- (c) And this initial stage guarantees the final issue to all who remain in Jesus Christ. So that while God sees the end in the beginning, our justification is first appreciated by us as a free gift (Rom. v. 16), and an acquittal (Rom. viii. 1). And indeed it is a free gift, because no sinner merits the gift of Jesus Christ; and acquittal it is, because in ourselves we are deserving of God's wrath.

II.—This acquittal involves the mystery of forgiveness.

- (a) It is only under certain conditions that God can justly forgive sins. When a man has a proper attitude towards sin, hating it and resolved not to sin again, then he has dissociated himself from his sin, and may be forgiven. Otherwise it is immoral to forgive a man his sins.
- (b) Now "in Christ" the Christian has adopted this attitude. He has identified himself with Christ and with his attitude towards sin. Hence repentance is a necessary condition of the active grace of baptism. And it follows that to be in Christ involves the position before God of being reckoned righteous.
- (c) But further, righteousness is not only imputed, but it is also infused. Jesus Christ is made unto us righteousness (1 Cor. i. 30). Consider that the Christian life is the development of the Christ within us, and it will follow that the Christian life is the progressive advance of his righteousness in us. Appreciate therefore the truth of such language as "that I may be found in him not having mine own righteousness" (Phil. iii. 9).

III.—Justification in life.

- (a) It is progressive according to the measure of grace. The development of Christian life is just the formation of Christ our righteousness within us. Hence the sacraments are the participation of Christ, while sin is the contradiction or denial of Christ in us.
- (b) The end of life in Christ is to be conformed to him, to attain in him to his righteousness. Justification which was at the first the great acquittal is become at last the attainment of righteousness. Thus sanctification is the progressive history of justification. The end seems far off from any one of us, but it is assured in Christ, and after material death, when all opposition to the life of Christ in us is removed, the work of grace goes on more rapidly.
- (c) Thus in the end God is seen to be justified in all his ways. God is eternal, and that which we regard as "future" is with him ever present. He has measured aright the power of the life of Christ, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification (Rom. iv. 25). God is just, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and he is the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

The Gospel a Power

THIRD THURSDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"For it is the power of God unto salvation."—Rom. i. 16.

Picture : S. Paul as illustrating in his own person the truth of these words.

Pray : that you may follow the holy doctrine which he taught.

I.—*The Gospel a power.*

- (a) There is more in the gospel than in its declaration. It is not a mere announcement, or a device, or a philosophy. There is more in it than we see ; even S. Paul had not fathomed it when he wrote his epistles, still less when he submitted himself to it on the road to Damascus. Nay, he is still learning it.
- (b) It is a power. S. Paul in writing to the Thessalonians reminded them that the gospel came to them not in word only, but in power (1 Thess. i. 5). The gospel is not empty : it is based on divine fact. There is no use in having faith if that in which we put faith is unreliable or unreal. And this truth of the gospel is also an efficacious power : it is the power of God actively at work.
- (c) And this power is continuously working within, so that out of weakness we are made strong. The gospel is a moving power, not as a mere incentive, stirring us up to do our best, but as an infused force working within us, and supplying us with divine strength.

II.—*"Unto salvation."*

- (a) Appreciate the breadth of it. Salvation is no scheme, no technicality of a system. Salvation is safety : it is equivalent to life, and that is the same as being in Christ. Union with him is life, apart from whom is no life : and in him we are safe, for he cannot die.
- (b) Salvation is only in its initial stage to be regarded as the forgiveness of sins. It is safety, that is immunity from sin. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for it is he that shall save his people from their sins" (S. Matt. i. 21), means that he shall save his people from sinning, from the fruits and contamination of sin, and from any hurt of sin to pass over them.
- (c) Salvation therefore is in the life of Christ in his Church. The Church is the home of safety, the life of Christ, wherein are ministered the sacraments of life and power. To be a vital member of the Church is to be in the way which is salvation (Acts ii. 47, R.V.). This way of safety is the same as the life of justification.

III.—*"The power of God."*

- (a) All life is in God, who is the sole source of life. "When thou takest away their breath they die and are turned again to their dust" (Ps. civ. 29). So too, the spiritual life of man, which raises him above the animal into fellowship with God, is breathed by God into man. Appreciate the divinity of this life, and forget not its source.
- (b) Thus this life is in the power of God ; it is God's power infused into man, by which he is to live. "I live, yet not I." And so it can only be lived by the power of God. We cannot expect steam to do the work of electricity, nor the physical life to perform the work of the illuminated intellect. But there is no limit to the power of God. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13).
- (c) The one impediment to this life, which is the power of God working in us, is the opposition of another life, the intrusion of the life of self, the natural man, which receiveth not the things of the spirit of God" (1 Cor. ii. 14). So it is that when I am weak then am I strong (2 Cor. xii. 10).

Grace and Faith

THIRD FRIDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."—Eph. ii. 8.

Consider: B.V.M. as the example of perfect response to grace: Hail Mary, full of grace! "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word."

Pray: for grace to respond to the gift of God.

I.—"Grace."

- (a) The word grace is used by us in two senses, which, though allied, represent quite distinct notions. One is the abstract idea of God's favour towards us, the other is the concrete idea of help given to us by God in consequence of that favour. The former is unmerited and uncovenanted; the latter is unmerited, but is in accordance with God's covenant.
- (b) Thus it is of God's favour towards us that he sent His Son into the world for our salvation, an act of favour so stupendous that we are thereby assured that he will "with him also freely give us all things" (Rom. viii. 32). It is no wonder therefore that it was said to Mary, "Blessed art thou among women." In giving us Jesus Christ, he has indeed covenanted to give us in him all the active grace which we need: "Of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace" (S. John i. 16).
- (c) Under the gospel therefore our life is pre-eminently the life of grace. Our baptism made us Christians by the grace of God, unmerited and uncovenanted; but as Christians we can by the grace of God serve and please him, and to this grace we have a right, because it is in accordance with his covenant.

II.—"Through faith."

- (a) We are saved by grace: only in a less degree can we say that we are saved by faith: "by grace, through faith." Faith is the condition of not impeding the flow of grace: it is submission into the hands of God to receive from him. "Thy faith hath saved thee," said Jesus Christ, when it was his word which had healed the sick.
- (b) And faith itself is a grace, a spiritual gift. It is of Almighty God's mercy that at any moment any one of us has inclination and power to open his heart to receive his saving gifts. That Blessed Mary had faith to receive her message and say, "Be it unto me according to thy word," was part of the grace vouchsafed to her.
- (c) Consider therefore the cultivation of that faith which can receive grace. Have a great faith in the sacramental power of God within you: remember that trust in God to be availing must go hand in hand with distrust in self. Pray therefore to be delivered from self, and for fidelity to grace.

III.—"The gift of God."

- (a) All doctrine intimately affects life, for truth is one whether of expression or of action. It is not a past or merely controversial truth that justification is not of works; it is the secret of the life of grace, that we are created anew in Christ unto good works (Eph. ii. 10), and that this creation is God's gift. The frame of mind which is always declaring "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. ix. 15) is that faithful condition which is receptive of grace.
- (b) And this truth, which places the initiative with God at every moment, may find further illustration from considering the fact of sin's impediment. That sin dwelleth in me, and that I have sinned, are two barriers to the reception of God's grace other than as a free gift. And even the holy Mother called God her *Saviour*, for he had regarded her and done to her great things (S. Luke i. 47-49).
- (c) Christian life is the response to grace, not grace the response to Christian life. It is the opening of the life to the expanding influences of God's love, and all the gifts of strength and holiness which his love brings with it.

Redemption and Justification

THIRD SATURDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace: . . . sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance unto the redemption of God's own possession."—Eph. i. 7, 14 (R.V.).

Picture: two redemptions from slavery, as illustrative of the two uses of the word *redemption* above: one, to set a slave at liberty but ready to be taken captive again; the other to bring him into a land of liberty and to deliver him from the effects of slavery upon himself.

Pray: that this prospect may ever be before you, that you may press toward the mark.

I.—*Past redemption—a state of justification.*

- (a) This past reference is to baptism, involving the forgiveness of our trespasses and the sealing of us by the Holy Spirit as God's own. "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise" (Is. xliii. 21). And it was an act of grace.
- (b) The redemption is but an earnest. An earnest is a partial payment, given as guarantee that the full payment is to follow. Consider what must be the end, if such gifts are but a first instalment.
- (c) But the earnest payment is part of the very thing; it is not another kind of thing given in pledge. The sanctification of baptism, cleansing from sin, is earnest of the entire deliverance from the dominion of sin. Consider that future.

II.—*Present redemption—a process of justification.*

- (a) The life of grace under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. It is the fruit of the initial act, which was not isolated, but brought us into a *state* of grace: we were justified before God. The slave of sin was not left in the slave country to be taken captive again, but was translated into the kingdom of freedom.
- (b) This present redemption is the setting him free indeed by the action of his new life upon him, his deliverance from the mind of the slave. It is a long process to which he responds according to the degree in which he learns to value his new condition, and to open himself to receive its gifts and benefits. The state into which he has been brought moulds him after its own fashion.
- (c) And this too is an earnest of the future. The spirit of promise was given him, sealing him unto the final day of redemption (Eph. iv. 30). The present is always a preparation for the future: accounted just before God, he is being sanctified that he may become holy even as he is holy. Once more consider that future in the light of all the joy and happiness of God's favour and sanctification.

III.—*Future redemption—the attainment of justification.*

- (a) The final state is the consummation of the past and present: the forgiveness of sins is justified by the results: the imputed righteousness is no longer contradicted by one's life: he has attained through grace to righteousness.
- (b) Consider this state of bliss with regard to the slave. He has lost all the effects of his slavery, his fear and cowardice, his slave's mind and thoughts and habits: he has attained to the full exercise of liberty, to enlightened understanding: he thinks and acts as a freeborn man. No trace of his slavery remains upon him, and the memory of it only in so far as it enhances his present joy. This is verily the riches of his grace.
- (c) This final redemption is the complete emancipation when God claims finally as his own possession those whom he has made his own: now they realize that throughout they have been "a people for God's own possession" (1 S. Pet. ii. 9, R.V.), and that this has been what has made the richness of life in the Catholic Church (see also Mal. iii. 17, R.V.)

The Sleep of Jesus

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"But he was asleep."—S. Matt. viii. 24.

Picture: the scene.

Resolve: acts of faith in the silent providence of God.

I.—*The sleep of Jesus in his humanity.*

- (a) Consider how tired was he who could thus sleep through the storm. Truly he spared not his human frame in the service of man. And regard herein his sympathy with the sons of men who need sleep, with the temptations of an over-worn human body. Consider his merciful tenderness to those who fall asleep over their prayers from fatigue, and towards those who suffer from sleeplessness.
- (b) Consider also his self-control. Various things are said of him which otherwise a false reverence might have denied to his true human nature; but although he experienced scenes of great danger and alarming violence, it is never suggested that he showed signs of alarm or anxiety, whereas his calmness impressed others. Such self-control in crisis of anxiety and danger are one sign among others of the discipline of his human nature.
- (c) Consider, side by side with this, his fearlessness. Fearlessness and self-control are by no means identical; either may exist without the other. His fearlessness in the danger of the storm was due to his consciousness that the divine purpose could not be thwarted; nor did the master of storms fear his servant. And we are as closely associated with him in the dangers of physical life as were the disciples in the boat.

II.—*"I sleep, but my heart waketh."*—Cant. v. 2.

- (a) Before the Epiphany season passes away, consider once more the mystery of that life of lives. The pre-incarnate sleep in the bosom of the Father, of the humanity as yet only existing in the foreknowledge of the eternal mind, while his godhead was ever active in nature and in grace; the sleep of that humanity in the womb of the B.V.M. in union with his Eternal Godhead; his sleep of infancy on his mother's breast; the sleep of healthful fatigue after the labour of the carpenter's shop; the wearied sleep of later days, and the restful sleep during the shortened three days.
- (b) Consider, too, his sleep in the Holy Eucharist, in the Host, wherein with his heart ever wakeful he sleeps in his Church, as of old he slept in the boat surrounded by his disciples, whom he was protecting in sleep, while the storms of the world raged around them. Again and again have they gathered round his Eucharistic sleep, and his disciples know that in his good time he has roused himself to still the storm, for his heart was awake.
- (c) Consider, too, his silent sleep of providence: we forget his presence, he is so silent: but he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. Through the night watches he waketh, through the heat of the day he watches, yet he gives no sign of his presence save only to those who can mark his presence by his still small voice within as one who rests.

III.—*The possibility of sleeping in Jesus.*

- (a) "I will lay me down in peace and take my rest." Every night should be such a sleep, resting in him spiritually and physically. There is such a thing as to sleep in him spiritually while the storms of temptation assail; more often we are like the disciples, alarmed, and fearful, calling upon him wildly, scarcely believing that he will save us; "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" (S. Mark iv. 38); "Lord, save us; we perish."
- (b) He sleeps while his heart waketh. Consider, by way of contrast, the lot of those who are awake while the heart sleepeth. Many once enlightened and strengthened by the grace of Confirmation are now spiritually asleep: pray for such, and that they may be wakened out of sleep.
- (c) In the earliest extant epistle of S. Paul he instructs those who were disturbed lest their departed Christian friends should be deprived of any share in the coming of Jesus Christ in his glory. He assures them that Christians are not like the rest, men without hope; that their departed have "fallen asleep through Jesus" (1 Thess. iv. 14, R.V. marg.). May they rest in peace!

Beseeching Jesus to depart

FOURTH MONDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"They besought him that he would depart out of their coasts."—S. Matt. viii. 34.

Picture : the healing—and the request.

Consider whether I have not at some time made the same request.

I.—*The loss of the swine.*

- (a) In selfish absorption over their loss no one gave heed to the blessing upon the man healed (S. Mc. v. 15). No thought that his cure was of more importance than the loss of the pigs. Think now of the history of the opium trade, or of the liquor traffic in Africa, and of the fairly general conviction that it is of prime importance that trade shall not be hurt.
- (b) A remarkable miracle had been done. There was no gainsaying it, and there could be no attempt to dispute it. And in those villages must have been many other sick folk. He who had done this could cure them. So men rightly reasoned elsewhere, and crowded him with their invalids. But here was no thought for any such; their minds were absorbed in their material loss.
- (c) It was a brave miracle too; the man was a local terror, and here was the healer sitting by his side. He had rid them of their danger, and he had not healed him for gain. Yet such elements of the case did not suggest that there might be compensation for the loss of the swine, or justifying reason. Pray not to be stupefied by attachment to material things.

II.—*"They besought."*

- (a) The servants acted from fear of their masters; one can excuse them. They were responsible for the pigs and had lost them. Their only hope of escape from blame was to bring their masters to see the proof of the sight which they had seen. It is good to make all reasonable excuses for apparently unspiritual conduct, and not to be hyper-critical.
- (b) And when the whole population turned out, it was fear, even more than the loss of the swine, which moved them. They saw the power, but did not see it rightly. The power had cured a raving lunatic; it had not wantonly destroyed even the pigs. But they did not see that they, too, might obtain benefit from the power.
- (c) But they did not attempt compulsion. They were heathen presumably; the district was heathen, and Jews were not likely to be keeping swine. So they treated him according to their notions, as they might have behaved to any one of their own gods in the likeness of men. They feared lest he should do further mischief, and they would appease him by the sight of a whole village imploring him to depart.

III.—*"To depart out of their coasts."*

- (a) It is easy to despise these village heathen; easy, too, to moralize on their selfishness. But perhaps we are not very different from them when our material interests are effected. We beseech him not to interfere with our politics, our business, our investments, our recreation, lest he should harm what we desire in them.
- (b) Frequently we beseech him to depart out of our own coasts, and to keep himself to his own proper place, to Sunday, and the times of saying prayers, and of sickness. Afraid to be made uncomfortable by his presence, we try to say that religion has nothing to do with the bulk of life.
- (c) He obeyed. It is not his way to resist. From him that hath not shall be taken even that he hath. Not even the heathen were to be converted by force; still less are bad or indifferent Christians.

Church and Country

FOURTH TUESDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"They are God's ministers."—Rom. xiii. 6.

Picture : S. Paul the Roman citizen at Cæsar's judgment-seat.

Resolve : to be more strict in some aspect of my citizen life.

I.—*Church and country.*

- (a) Think what divisions you would make of your spheres of life. Many would say—home, business, and Church, and mean by the last their Sunday duty and the support of their parish church. S. Paul here divides the spheres into Church, world and nation.
- (b) National life is often neglected by Christians as a sphere of Christian responsibility, although our public worship keeps it prominently before us. Perhaps we have thought that the "state prayers" are a mark of Erastianism : but the Church would not withdraw them if she were disestablished. There is danger of Christian narrowness ; some forget the world ; more forget the nation.
- (c) This neglect of the nation may arise from selfishness. Living in the enjoyment of Christian fellowship as a haven of rest in the sea of the world's opposition, we may be indifferent to the divine office to be fulfilled by national life. Or it may be due to misunderstanding ; recognizing that "politics" ought not to be dragged into religion, and knowing that churchmen differ even on political matters which affect the Church, one may persuade oneself to leave all such things alone.

II.—*God and country.*

- (a) S. Paul was impressed by the influence of the Roman government upon Christianity, and that its good order was favourable to Christianity. He bade men respect government for conscience sake. All good government makes for the better conditions of life, even if it be not Christian ; and makes it more possible for Christians to lead a quiet life. A good Christian must be a good citizen.
- (b) The obligations upon English Christians in this way are enormous ; we enjoy immense privileges under our civil rule. Gratitude and conscience alike demand that we pray for all our rulers, legislators and administrators. They are God's ministers,—whether Christians or not—striving after the attainment of an ideal which has been almost entirely formed by Christian principles and influences.
- (c) The Christian is not satisfied with prayer alone ; he also strives to forward good government. He is greatly concerned with the peace and welfare of the world ; home legislation, fair dealing between men, equality, proper conditions of life, education, are proper spheres for his influence. Municipal and local interests are part of his duty to provide things honest in the sight of all men. And for this he will seek to understand.

III.—*National life.*

- (a) Difficult to think of our being familiar with the divine direction of the national life of the Jews without perceiving that Almighty God has a vocation for nations. If S. Paul felt the vocation of the Roman empire, much more should we realize the unique responsibilities, opportunities and endowments of our own country.
- (b) This responsibility has nothing to do with any peculiar relation between Church and State. The Roman Catholic and the Dissenter share it with us. Consider our responsibility to the colonies, with their teeming life insufficiently ministered to, our responsibility to India and Egypt, to the countries where Englishmen settle and trade, and where consequently English character has influence.
- (c) Consider that the influence of national life upon the people is very great. National character and public opinion are very important factors in life, and they are always being moulded. And in the world of daily life Christians are affected very much for good and for evil by such influences.

The Light Manifested

FOURTH WEDNESDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"God is light."—1 S. John i. 5.

Picture: light as the manifestation of glory.

Resolve: to walk in the light.

I.—*The nature of God.*

- (a) Consider the confidence that is established by S. John's declaration, that this Epiphany of life is based upon the nature of God. Fellowship, Sonship: joy; and we ask "How?" He refers us for the answer to God himself, the source of all things. Possible for us, we being what we are, only if Almighty God make it so, and he cannot deny himself. Here is the same confidence as is established by the Creed, which expresses our belief neither in individual experiences nor in the right grasp of doctrine, but in facts, and yet more truly in the Person of whom these are facts.
- (b) It is the nature of Almighty God to go out of himself, while never departing from himself, as the sun shines in its glory. Thus creation is such an extension of God in activity. Perhaps of all similes light is the least inadequate: we may regard the purpose of God throughout the ages as light shining in the darkness: pass on to the Incarnation as the light of the world: then the Church is the extension of this light.
- (c) To this self-revelation of God, which is love, we are to ascribe the problem of fellowship. All that is outside God is of sin, which is darkness. Inside the light, which diffuses and penetrates, is cleansing, life, illumination, warmth. In this light is found fellowship and joy, and the light is the way which leads right up to the glory of God.

II.—*The precious Blood: the Advocate.*

- (a) There is the light issuing forth from God; but what of ourselves? S. John says, "The blood of Jesus his Son." It is in the light; it is from God. S. John is writing to Christians; his thought is not of the possibility of coming out of darkness into light, but of how to continue walking in the light, while conscious that we sin. The Church, which is the life of Christ, which is the light, is the sphere of this forgiving and cleansing grace.
- (b) This cleansing in the fellowship of the light is further developed. In fellowship with the Father and with the Son we have an Advocate with the Father. The daily cleansing is the experience of this advocacy; and the advocacy is effectual, because it is based upon the propitiation. The advocacy for Christians is based upon the universality of the propitiation. Thus fellowship in the light issues from the wider truth of the office of his Son to the world in human nature.
- (c) The fellowship is the realized experience of that coming forth from God which issues in the stream of the Incarnate life; and its character as the purpose of one's being is fitly expressed by walking in the light. S. John does not ask how we can walk; he treats it as a fact of Christian life as certain as our natural power to walk in space. And this walking is the condition of being held up in the stream of advocacy.

III.—*Walking even as he walked.*

- (a) The life was manifested: he has declared in his life how man should walk. In the light one walks in him, in fellowship with him, with him as guide. It is in view of the experience that our walking is so inadequate a walking as he walked, that S. John has reminded us of the precious Blood and of the advocacy.
- (b) He has revealed the walking in the full and unbroken fellowship of the light. This walking may be tested by two practical rules, lest one say that one is walking in the light, when one is in darkness: the keeping of God's word, and loving one's fellow-Christians.
- (c) These two rules are both old and new; they are in their full realization as old as the manifestation of the life, and they are new in their interpretation in each age of the Church, and in each stage of life's progress. This fellowship with God and man is therefore always a source of joy, as each stage reveals new development.

The Fellowship of Sons

FOURTH THURSDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness."—S. John viii. 12.

Picture: the Light of the world.

Resolve: to use the fellowship of sons.

I.—*Antichrist: the chrism.*

- (a) There is the light in which we are to walk; it streams forth from God; in it the life is to be realized, which was once manifested in him who is the light of the world; and following him we shall not walk in darkness. This is the life of fellowship, and therefore of joy. But a fellowship which under existing conditions does not imply conflict is unthinkable; and progress is through conflict.
- (b) There is a temptation to think that the conflict is a sign of not being in the light. Remember that the light is shining through darkness, and that it shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. iv. 18). We have not reached the dazzling light where no darkness is. There is Antichrist in us, as there is in the Church, that spirit which seems to be of fellowship, and is not; that part of the life which is not yet Christianized by the Precious Blood (1 S. John ii. 18).
- (c) But S. John never doubts that we can keep in the light; and over against the Antichrists he reminds us that we have an unction, a chrism. Over against the Antichrist is the "Christ"; over against the self is the Christ-life, developing in us (vers. 20 ff. 27).

II.—*Sons of God: sons of the devil.*

- (a) The conflict of life is not only within. Again the struggle is presented in its extremest form, and thus a suggestion is given upon the real possibility of keeping in the light. The Christ-life in the light is the having been begotten of God. If the change of nature has not yet completed its work, if not as yet are we like him on whom we have set our hope, nevertheless the nature of sonship is there.
- (b) And this sonship is bestowed. It is neither a boast, nor an idea, nor an aspiration: it is a fact. Walking in the light is the discovery of this fact by the experience of its enabling power, and this experience is the appreciation of fellowship. We may therefore view the conflict under two aspects; sin is the breach of fellowship, and sin is ultimately of the devil. Or again, hate is the other breach of fellowship, and its extreme issue in Cain shews its dependence upon the devil.
- (c) Thus the conflict is one of rival powers. It is not only that we are not sufficient of ourselves to advance in the light, but we also need the grace of sonship to resist the power of the devil who tempts to break the fellowship through sin and lovelessness. It is the tendency of life which is unconcerned about fellowship, to avoid the recognition of the rival power, and to expect little from the power of divine sonship.

III.—*The fellowship: the world.*

- (a) The world here is regarded as an opposition (iii. 13 ff.), and not as an attraction (as in ii. 15 ff.). In S. John's days it hated the brotherhood; now it seems rather to drag down the life by suggesting the failures of God; it depresses. We do not feel the opposition so much, because we realize the brotherhood so lightly. If we were more Christ-like the world would really hate us (S. John xv. 18-19).
- (b) The test, of course, is Christ, in whom the life was manifested. He laid down his life for us; we in him should do so for our brethren. The more we walk in the light, the more ready we shall be to do this; for in the light Almighty God penetrates us with his love. And we, too, shall find that the effort of fellowship, the experience of sonship, is a laying down of life.
- (c) The fellowship which thus experiences that which he manifested, who lay down his life for us, is expressed godwards in confidence and prayer in proportion as this experience is entered into. The heart beats true to God when walking in the light, and his heart beats with the needs of the world and the love of the brotherhood.

The Victory of Life

FOURTH FRIDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."—1 S. John v. 4.

Picture: the victory of the Son of God.

Resolve: to live in his victory.

I.—*The victory of love.*

- (a) Conflict is the condition of victory; and the victory is assured in the light. S. John's Epiphany epistle is in reality a study of the Incarnation. As conflict was the condition of his victory, and therefore of ours, so, too, his victory is ours, first in our nature, then by appropriation; and so, through the effort of conflict, in experience; lastly, in full realization.
- (b) The basis of victory is love. God is love, as he is light. It is the same truth. The nature of love is not self, but going out from self. So the history of love is manifested in the Incarnation; he sent forth his Son. And this love is the basis of fellowship with himself through the propitiation (1 S. John iv. 9-10), and with one another (vv. 10, 12, 16).
- (c) The love which is of God is in us, and is the source of joy. Its development in us by the reproduction of the life of Christ is the history of love in self-sacrifice. It is not the question of our love, but the power of his love (vv. 10, 12), and in the progress of his love with us in fellowship is the growing conformity to Christ ("As he is" in this Epistle means "as Christ is"), and therein the increasing confidence, and, finally, the boldness in the day of judgment (ver. 17, R.V.). We get to know that God's love must win.

II.—*The victory of faith.*

- (a) If love is the basis of fellowship, faith is its history. We believe the whole revelation which the Name expresses (ver. 1). And this is the reproduction in us of the life of sonship, the growth of the Christ-life in us. Faith is not adherence to a series of facts external to us; it is the correspondence with and growing experience of the reproduction of the facts within our own life.
- (b) Such victory of faith may have its failures and lapses, but it never doubts that they are such. Every time that we say the Creed we declare the history of conquest, and the principle of the Christian's daily life in light. At first S. John said: "The Blood of Jesus his Son"; now he expands. In the crisis of his self-sacrifice the water and the blood symbolized the sacramental life of Christ in the Church, which is his Body (ver. 6).
- (c) The same truth is now presented under the term of witness. There is the three-fold witness to the truth that Christ is come in the flesh: there is the Spirit active in the Church and in the world; and there are the water and the blood witnessing through the Christ-life which they establish and maintain. This witness is historical; it is the living witness of the Church. This is a presentation of the victory of faith; God's witness is given historically in his Son, internally in the sacramental life of the Son, and realized in the eternal life of the Son in us (v. 7-11).

III.—*The victory of eternal life.*

- (a) This is the sun of the whole epistle (vv. 13-20, cp. i. 1-4). If love is the basis, and faith is the history, eternal life is the realization of the victory. And this eternal life is already ours; in the light we have it. Its power and development is the progress in sonship, fellowship, love, assimilation of the life of Christ.
- (b) Consider some experiences of life. Boldness in intercession is one of them (vv. 14-17). If the consciousness of life is feeble, perhaps it is that we do not exercise it sufficiently: intercession gives it space to expand, for it is an activity of faith in the Son of God, who was manifested in flesh. The certainty of spiritual knowledge is another (vv. 18-20). Here, too, life may be weak; it is they who put God's Word to the greatest test who are most conscious that they know.
- (c) In an earlier portion of this epistle our thoughts were directed to the Advocate. Now see in him our victory and our life. But there are idols, false in that they draw us away from God; unsubstantial in themselves. From such the Christian must guard himself by concentration upon the life in the light.

Life's Continuity Revealed

FOURTH SATURDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"Hereafter ye shall see heaven open."—S. John i. 51.

Picture : the vision of Jacob's ladder as symbolic of the Incarnation

Resolve : to use my Communion as a preparation for heaven.

I.—*The continuity of life in the Incarnation.*

- (a) The Ascension of Christ reveals him as the surety of man. He is the forerunner, and the guarantee that God's purposes for man are not to be thwarted by sin. The Ascension of Christ in his manhood is his Ascension in the fruits of atoning life and death and victorious resurrection.
- (b) Man made Christian. The ascended Christ became a life-giving Spirit and delivers his life to us and develops it in us till it arrives at maturity in each one of us.
- (c) Man in heaven. The perfection of development attained, but the same man, even as Jesus Christ is the same man as the Babe of Bethlehem and the crucified. Individuality is no more lost in heaven than in baptism of which heaven is the consummation. The life in heaven, whatsoever it is, is one with the baptismal life, one with and through the Incarnate life.

II.—*The life of heaven revealed through the Incarnate life.*

- (a) The unclouded vision of God (1 S. John iii. 2). This in itself includes all blessings. We may read something of it in the habitual communion of the Son of Man, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "Thinkest thou that I cannot now speak to my Father?"
- (b) Assured attainment. He through sinlessness, we at length through matured grace. The absence of that which is the strain of life here—the effort of perseverance struggling against the danger of falling back. In a word, rest instead of anxiety. This too is characteristic of the Incarnate life: its intense settled calm and assurance.
- (c) Clear perception of the will of God. Now we know in part, but then in fulness. Growth in life now is the increasing perception of the unity of God's will, thereby enabling the Christian to put greater trust in him. Through the revelation in the gospels of the Incarnate life we may understand, so far as our powers allow, the prospect of heaven's full understanding of the divine will, when the human will shall be in entire harmony with the divine will through submission.

III.—*The way to heaven is through the Incarnation.*

- (a) The abiding of Christ in the believer. Truly there, waiting to be called upon by a still voice if he be treated as an honoured guest; by effort in proportion to the faithlessness of the Christian. What does it not reveal of the personal life when one finds it very difficult to realize his individuality and to call upon him?
- (b) The Holy Communion is the nearest earthly approach to heaven. It is, indeed, the Apocalyptic vision of heaven, even as it is the maintenance of the Incarnate life for that purpose. "This is the bread that came down—cometh down—from heaven" (S. John vi. 33-41).
- (c) The Incarnate life on earth and in heaven is one, but the places are two; and the Christian life on earth and in heaven is one, but the places are two. When Christ came down from heaven, he gave up something. He emptied himself. What that means we shall know in heaven. But the life that he lived on earth is one life with the life that he ever lives. So too the life of heaven is one with the life begun on earth; but the present is not the future, although one in continuity.
The Incarnate life was for the purpose of filling heaven. Estimate each by the other, and use each one to strengthen hold upon the other.

Childhood

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"But when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also."—S. Matt. xiii. 26.

Picture: the parable.

Pray: for the young, and for Confirmation candidates.

I.—*The life of a child.*

- (a) The good seed is sown in baptism. The little faith which we have in this sacrament of grace is evidenced by the small place which it takes in our whole view of Christian life. And this is a due punishment for our reckless administration of it. The good seed which is sown does not yet appear; and again, the good seed must be put into suitable soil.
- (b) The seed is sown; but the tares are already there. Yet neither are the tares as yet appearing above the ground. And so we call this negative appearance "innocence," and think that the progress of the infant's life henceforth is degeneration. We forget that the ground suitably chosen for the seed is nevertheless not an empty ground.
- (c) But the child grows. We think that he is changing for the worse; but it is not so. The tares and the good seed are competing for the possession of the soil. It is true that in the child both the wheat and the tares look much alike, and equally harmless, as they put forth their first little blade above the ground. But in truth the greatest fight of his life is going on unconsciously in the first sprouting.

II.—*When the blade was sprung up.*

- (a) Allow time for this, and do not lose faith in the good seed sown. The little blades of tares may even shoot forth first, or rather later grow ahead more rapidly. A careless trampling on the soil of his heart may even impede the growth of the good seed: let the gentle rains and the sun from heaven do their work.
- (b) There is danger in relying upon immediate fruitfulness, or of forcing the seed. Impression is not seed; the Word of God has been sown long ago. A quickening word may cause it to break through the ground; but if it shoot forth before its time it will be destroyed by the frosts or biting winds.
- (c) The fruit spoken of is only the sprouting of the first green grass; it is not the mature grain. One must not look for heavy golden ears in the spring time, nor can one do much beyond keeping off the birds and the trampling feet of passers-by. For the rest, one must pray to the Lord of the harvest: it may be he will let you bring the warmth of love's sun and the gentle penetrating showers of correction.

III.—*Then appeared the tares.*

- (a) It is at the same age when the good seed is beginning to manifest itself in conscious life that the tares also are striving for the possession of the soil. This struggle is the first strong evidence of life. The conflict will take varying forms, some of them more violent than others; and the fight has to be. It is unreasonable to think that the tares are freshly sown, or to regard the struggle as a mark of degeneration.
- (b) As earlier the hidden seed had to be nurtured, so now the soil of the heart must be strengthened against the discouragement of opposition, and for the fight which is before it. The Sower has provided the grace of Confirmation; and the wise agriculturalist will use it at this time, and not wait until the tares have grown up.
- (c) When one considers how grave is the struggle of life's expansion even in soil carefully prepared, diligently watched and faithfully guarded, what must be the experience of those in whom the good seed has been sown in the ground of a non-Christian locality, and where the soil has never been guarded from ruthless trampling, or the young blades are not protected from the birds of the air! Pray, especially, therefore, for the young who have no one to pray for them.

Tares and Wheat

FIFTH MONDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"Let both grow together until the harvest."—S. Matt. xiii. 30.

Picture: the parable.

Resolve: Prayer for fellow-Christians.

I.—*"The Sower" and "the Tares."*

- (a) In the former parable much good seed was lost; in the latter there is a great struggle for existence with what is left to grow up well. Why does God thus squander his seed? The thought suggests many reflections upon the principles of effort and failure as according to the divine will. And if he is content to be thus lavish, must I expect every little effort of mine to be successful?
- (b) In the former the ground was wrong: here there is an external enemy. Two spheres of struggle; the word of God has to contend against the natural heart and the activity of opposing spiritual powers. In the individual life there is a similar experience.
- (c) The parable of the tares does not directly regard the experience of the individual heart; the good field is the Church, in which wheat and tares are mixed by the malice of the enemy. So, too, in the former parable the good ground is rather the persevering portion of the Church militant, bringing forth different degrees of perfection in her members.

II.—*Tares in the Church.*

- (a) There is no thought here that the presence of the tares is useful. Opposition from the world is useful, for the development of Christian character; but in the Church the presence of tares compresses the wheat, and draws away from its nourishment. An enemy hath done this: Satan has entered the new paradise.
- (b) The parable warns us against the radical error of puritanism. It is tempting to try to separate between wheat and tares, and many have reasoned that, because the interpretation says that the field is the world (v. 38), the parable has nothing to do with the Church. Even so, we are warned that no external separation between the two can be made, and that the children of the kingdom must be left among the tares.
- (c) But rather are we bidden to reflect that the Church in the world is the Church in process of formation, that visible society which has a material existence; whereas within the Church upon earth is the spiritual existence of the children of the kingdom. The Church in the world has tares and wheat, for here the Church is being collected; then will come the separation.

III.—*Lest ye root up also the wheat.*

- (a) As we look upon the children of the kingdom we are sadly aware how they are dwarfed in their growth by the presence of the tares; they grow under difficulties. The parable is full of comfort for such reflections, and bids us be very charitable and hopeful of those who are struggling against great odds. Remember also that there is a harvest ripening after the wheat is withdrawn from the tares.
- (b) It bids us also reflect upon the mercy of God, who will not quench the smoking flax. The poor wheat is to be separated at the right time by the Lord of the harvest, in full knowledge of the circumstances under which it has grown. It is too precious in his sight to be pulled up now in a rough and hasty attempt to clear the field of tares. And at the last, poor as it is, a mere field maybe of thirty-fold, it is to be gathered into the barn.
- (c) And for encouragement mark the contrast of the parable. "The Lord is not slack as some count slackness; but is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish." Here the wheat struggling to grow amid the tares: but hereafter "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (v. 43). What work of grace in the poor wheat!

The Peace of Christ

FIFTH TUESDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"Let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body."—Col. iii. 15 (R.V. marg.).

Picture: the scene in the upper room. "Let not your heart be troubled . . . My peace I give unto you."—S. John xiv.

Resolve: to seek peace and ensue it.

I.—*The peace of Christ.*

- (a) Peace is not within ourselves, but rather the conflict of opposing aims and ideals. Consider the evidence of experience to the truth that man is made for an end outside himself, that in so far as he is selfish he fails miserably of peace.
- (b) More often the "peace of God." They are not two things: we must not divide the Trinity. But here *Christ's* peace, because the Apostle is thinking of his body. His peace is to be found in his body the Church. She has found this not least true in days of persecution. Over against the distracting claims of the world lies the peace of rest in the fellowship of God.
- (c) The peace of Christ in this body is the fruit of "I have overcome the world" (S. John xvi. 33). It is the peace of victory, and the Church is the fellowship of the triumphant. To struggle for peace is like fidgeting to get cool in hot weather. Peace is the being hid with Christ in God.

II.—*Let this peace arbitrate in your hearts.*

- (a) The human heart is divided: it is the scene of the battlefield of opposing allegiances: the world, the flesh and the devil, self and the Spirit of God, a thousand ambitions, emotions, passions, regrets. A whole world-history is reproduced in each individual heart. There is need of an arbitrator.
- (b) Let Christ's peace arbitrate: his legacy of victory. This is not peace at any price: nor even the peace of a good resolution, having made up one's mind. It is fellowship with him who is the harmonizer of the world's discordant claims, the solution of the unsatisfied longings of the human heart, and the destroyer of the power of evil. "He always wins who sides with God."
- (c) The peace of Christ is in the Church. Here we have Christ's peace, and do not need to go in search of it. The peace of Christ is not a state of feelings: it is fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. Unto this we were called in one body: and that we may let it arbitrate in our hearts, we must make our membership in his body the supreme consideration of our lives. There must not be a divided allegiance within. Pray that we may so realize the joy of Christ's peace, as to find it dearer to us than life itself.

III.—*To the which also ye were called in one body.*

- (a) The peace of fellowship. It is one aspect of truth that in the Christian life we are called to become that which we are made. This is only another way of saying that Christianity is the life of grace. So here S. Paul says that we are called to realize peace in that one body which is the fruit of Christ's peace. The peace of Christian fellowship is through the arbitration of Christ. If Christ be dearer to us than all else, how can we not be at peace with one another in the peace of Christ?
- (b) Face this realization of Christ's peace in the one body with the appalling spectacle of a distracted Church: East and West separated, each split up, and in our own country divisions even within the family. The peace of Christ does not arbitrate, but human passions, worldly considerations; we trust to the arm of flesh: we make our own opinions the measure of the Catholic faith. Oh, pray for the peace of Jerusalem!
- (c) Consider the support of the faith in making for peace, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world then would my servants fight." Faithfulness to the faith can alone secure us the peace of Christ, whether as individuals or as a portion of Christ's Church: for the Catholic faith embodies the peace of Christ in history and in life.

The Word

FIFTH WEDNESDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*"—S. John i. 1.

Picture: S. John contemplating the mystery which he had received and by which he lived.

Pray: for reverence in meditation.

I.—*The Word.*

- (a) The Word (logos) expresses manifestation. It is the means of self-expression to another than oneself. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." It is the medium of communication. "No man cometh to the Father but by me."
- (b) The Logos also expresses the interior word—thought, reason. It is he, who was in the bosom of the Father, who made the revelation. The Logos is generated, and then proceeds. The Logos is eternally generated by the Father, for he never was without reason.
- (c) Thus Logos suggests the conceptions of eternal inter-fellowship and of external manifestation. See Prov. viii. 22 ff.; and S. John i. 18.

II.—*Thoughts suggested by the word "Logos."*

- (a) That divine revelation is rational. God is rational and has given to us reason; yet the end of revelation is not understanding but intelligent obedience and worship. The will accepts and acts upon that which the reason perceives to be good.
- (b) The divine preparation of human thought. The revelation of the name Logos as identified with the Incarnate Son was prepared for through the history of Hebrew and Alexandrian philosophy. Learn the sacredness of all study, which is a discipline of the mind to hold nothing rashly.
- (c) That to fear the investigation of divine mystery is unbelief in one of two directions; either in the rationality of revelation, and thus of God who reveals; or in the divine control of the individual life. To fear for oneself in the investigation of divine mystery is thus a divine warning leading us to realize that the knowledge of God cannot be through self-sufficiency, but through the divine education of the reason in harmony with the submission of the life and will to obedience. See S. John vii. 17.

III.—*S. John's threefold assertion of the Word.*

- (a) Eternity. "In the beginning was." Eternity is not a mathematical conception, the mere unendingness of time. Time and eternity belong to different categories: time is material; eternity is spiritual. The divine Word is apart from all time.
- (b) Personality. "Was with God"—towards God, in active fellowship. Admire the eternal inter-fellowship of God and reflect on his self-sufficiency. Then worship the divine love which desires that others should share in this life of fellowship. Consider, too, that "Person" expresses, in our experience, rationality and separateness, and that "fellowship" represents the closest parallel in human experience to unity of essence.
- (c) Divine essence. "The Word was God." If eternal, then God; for God is the highest good, and there cannot be two such. Again, if in inter-fellowship with God, then God; for God cannot have inter-fellowship with one who is inferior to himself. But consider that God and God are not two Gods, for number does not enter into the divine essence, but belongs to division, to which belongs also limit. Yet the divine inter-fellowship corresponds to what in our experience is realized only by two different persons, and is thus expressed by us in number.

The Word and Creation

FIFTH THURSDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"All things were made by him."—S. John i. 3.

Picture: think how a man's speech and work reveal his character. Much more is this so with God, who cannot be false.

Pray: for the power to see God in all things.

I.—Consider creation as the speech of God,

(a) Creation manifests the divine love in the fellowship of God with the Word. "God so loved the world" has a relation to "This is my beloved Son."

(b) And this is so in each of its multiform units—"All things."

"The world's no blot for us
Nor blank: it means intensely and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.

The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shape of things, their colours, lights and shades,
Changes and surprises—and God made it all!
—For what?" (Fra Lippo Lippi.—BROWNING).

(c) Creation is in process of development. "All things were made" *i.e.* "became," for the unfolding of a divine purpose in the progressive succession of the ages. That which began its history through the Word, will be found in the end to be also unto him (Col. i. 16).

II.—"That which was made, in him was life" (R.V. marg.).

(a) Creation is the manifesting in time and space of what was eternally in the mind of God, with whom is no beginning, change or end. In him—in his Logos—it *was* life even before creation (*cf.* Apoc. iv. 11, R.V. "they were, and were created").

(b) The Word is the life of creation (ver. 3), *cf.* S. John xv. 5. Not by analogy but by identity the Word is the sustainer of natural life. There is no life but in God. Remove the sustaining Word, and creation crumbles into nothingness. Remove him from the soul of man and it too withers into death. Learn not to divide physical, intellectual and spiritual life; they are all manifestations of the Word's presence in different spheres of his creative energy. Life is one, for God is one.

(c) Creation is not God. "In him was life." Creation is the vesture where-with God clothes himself for manifestation to his creatures. Matter and history are two progressive revelations of the Creator. See Heb. i. 1, 2.

III.—Light and darkness.

(a) Light is life in manifestation. Darkness is the negation of light, the absence of the divine life, and therefore death. All this is universally true, and not only since the Incarnation. The light shineth, and it was the light of mankind as a whole.

(b) But there is the converse. "The light shineth in the darkness." Darkness is just resistance to light. But thank God that the light shineth *in* it: it pierces the darkness and offers hope in spite of the antagonism. And the light still shineth.

(c) And from the nature of the case the issue is certain. The darkness never overcame the light. The world presents many perplexities to us in its non-Christian aspect, in heathen lands, etc. But the Word is its life; he is its light and he is unconquerable.

Reverence nature as a revelation of God. Have faith in God where the course of nature or of history is obscure to you.

The Word in History

FIFTH FRIDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"The true light, which lighteth every man, was coming into the world."—S. John i. 9, R.V. marg.

Consider: John Baptist's life as a witness to the Light.

Pray: for grace to witness for Christ by your life.

I.—*The Word manifested in the history of man.*

- (a) Side by side with the light of creation is the light of revelation to man: God's voice in the inner man, interpreting itself in many parts and in many manners. We see it most clearly in Jewish history, but it is not confined to the Jews.
- (b) John Baptist is typical of the purpose of God's creation of each man. He comes into being at a definitely appointed time (ver. 6 "There became a man"), and is a man, with all that that means, sent for a purpose on a mission. The office of man is to bear historic witness to the Eternal Word. Every man may thus be a John—a gift of God.
- (c) The condition is *self-hiding*. He was not the light, only a lamp lighted from the light (S. John v. 35, R.V.). His purpose was that all men through him might see the Light from which his lamp was lighted. That is mission.

II.—*The presence of the Word himself as light (vv. 9, 10).*

- (a) He was there (ver. 10), or "*It* was there," i.e. the Light, for he was not yet personally manifested, but perceived in the lamp, lighted from him, which manifested his presence.
- (b) He was ever coming (ver. 9, was, coming). To the individual in the events of his day, and in the supernatural events of the soul. To the world in the crises of history both in judgment and in mercy.
- (c) He was ever ready to come in his own true time. Ever ready to come to the individual when he can receive him—ever on the point of coming. To the world ever ready to come when the fulness of time is come.
Apply all this to our own period between the two Advents.

III.—*His special coming to the Jewish nation was consummated in the Incarnation (vv. 11-13).*

- (a) The Incarnation is not an isolated act. The eternal nature of the Word as thought, activity, manifestation: his work in creation: his manifestation in history as light, illuminating in prophet and inspired man: in a concentrated degree in the special revelation of Judaism coming to his own place, and his own people (ver. 11). At length the Incarnation (ver. 14).
- (b) They received him not. This too was not an isolated act. In ver. 11, S. John is not yet thinking of the historical Incarnation. That is not touched until verse 14. But they did not receive that revelation of light handed down along the ages. It was the rejection of the course of training, history and revelation. The seemingly isolated crisis is the issue of a long course of preparation, whether in the individual or the nation.
- (c) But as many as received him (ver. 12). The pre-Christian gospel. In receiving their light they did receive him (S. John viii. 56; 1 S. Pet. i. 10-12). In the history of John Baptist we read clearly the interpretation of the life of all the pre-Christian worthies. They bore witness of the light; they received him.

Faith and Rejection

FIFTH SATURDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"His own received him not: but as many as received him."—S. John i. 11, 12.

Picture: Life as a choice.

Pray: for faith to choose Christ in each decision.

I.—Aspects of rejection.

- (a) Light and darkness (ver. 5). There is darkness. No interpretation of the rejection satisfies, which does not regard the fall of mankind from fellowship with God. In independence man has separated himself from the source of light, and has left himself spiritually in darkness.
- (b) Recognition and unrecognition (ver. 10). As a result of the darkness the world fails to recognize him. The natural man doth not understand the things of God. Unbelief should not perplex us: but we pray for the illumination of the natural heart.
- (c) Faith and rejection (ver. 11). The last stage is wilful. It was his own people, to whom illumination had been given, who "received him not." The rejection was indeed by choice, but it had become of necessity by the long course of resistance. They had refused revelation, teaching, discipline.

II.—Three stages marked.

- (a) Natural religion. God known through creation. But nature through sin is out of harmony with the light: hence *conflict*. We must not allow the conflict to unsettle our faith: "the darkness overcame it not" (ver. 3, R.V. marg.).
- (b) Inspired religion. Through thought, philosophy, the lives of good men. All these are of God; but they lead only to a partial knowledge, insufficient, save as a preparation. The result is *unrecognition*. It does not recognize the true light as the goal of its endeavours or the source of its illumination. But in the full light we look confidently to see many a mystery solved of non-Christian life and thought.
- (c) Revealed religion. God known through the special revelation of Judaism, which was the particular preparation for the Incarnation. Their rejection was through unbelief, which is disobedience. They did not believe on his Name (ver. 12), for they measured their revelation by the limits of their natural conceptions.

III.—Considerations on faith (ver. 12).

- (a) The possibility of faith. In the divine course of preparation, through nature, history, the constitution of man. All these are activities of the Word, to whom faith is the response of human life.
- (b) The activity of faith. This response of the whole being in harmony with the inner meaning of life is a "taking"—an active energy co-operating with the purposes of God, in contrast with rejection which is described as a not receiving what has been handed down.
- (c) The individuality of faith. His own people did not profit by the course of their training, but *as many as* took him. They took him as individuals; the Jewish community did not pass over into the Christian Church, but individuals—Jew or Gentile—made the individual exertion of faith.

Faith and Sonship

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name."—S. John i. 12 (R.V.).

Picture : the confidence of children in their fathers.

Pray : for the spirit of sonship to be manifested in your prayers.

I.—*The divine recognition of faith.*

- (a) He gave them the right. Faith is not the end ; it is the personal condition : to such as believe on his name he gives the right. We may regard faith as the condition which does not oppose an obstacle to the divine gift, the self-surrender which will receive the gift : but it is a gift.
- (b) To become children of God. Nothing less than this : to share in the divine nature, being begotten of God. Behold what manner of love ! (see 1 S. John iii. 1, R.V.). The whole Christian life is the application of this fact in the experience of individual history.
- (c) He gave them the *right*.—The power, the authority—*exousia*—derived out of the very being of him whose children we are by the act of being begotten. No words could make it stronger. The authorization conveys the gift : Lord, increase our faith, that we may enter into the inner experiences of this great gift !

II.—*The gift of the divine begetting.*

It is expressed by three negatives.

- (a) It is not out of bloods. Not to be found in material elements, nor yet in descent. Not a privilege of natural condition or favourable circumstance.
- (b) Not out of the will of the flesh. Not in natural instincts or desires, or by any natural fitness and suitability.
- (c) Not out of the will of man. Not by any individual power, by intellectual conception, or by fixity of purpose and will—but out of God. His gift freely bestowed on them that believe on the name of his Son.

III.—*Final thoughts.*

- (a) Believing on his name is taking him. A definition of faith—to take Christ, who is within reach, as that upon which we stand firm. And the *name* is the sum of the revelation, not an isolated part of it. Not what we understand of Christ, but what he is, that is the gift.
- (b) This gift, arising out of God, is a begetting : a gift of life, instinct with powers of development. And corresponding to this is, "to them that believe." Faith is continuous, not an isolated act. The gift of sonship raises faith into the supernatural sphere, wherein it has a history of the experiences of grace.
- (c) To become. The appropriation and use of the divine gifts alone secure their permanent enjoyment. What we are made that we are to be ever becoming, even as we were made to become that which we were not. The gift is living, progressive : it requires the response of filial faith for its development, and the hope of that response lies in the nature of the gift. Made of God that which we are to be. "That men might be born of God, God was first born of men" (S. Augustine).

Destroying the Works of the Devil

SIXTH MONDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"Was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil."—1 S. John iii. 8.

Picture: S. John meditating on the conflict and on the victory.

Resolve: to meditate more deeply on the revelation of life in Jesus Christ.

I.—*The conflict.*

- (a) There was war in heaven; in the heavenly realm. As the most serious sins are not the material ones, not immorality and drunkenness, but pride, envy, or self-complacency, so the sin of the spiritual creatures is graver than the sin of the lower creatures made from the dust of the earth. And in this realm of created spirit sin came to its birth. But the divine Word upheld the angels, created through him and subsisting in him.
- (b) Then on earth the conflict renewed itself in the vigour of a new campaign, and the material world was made to minister to the works of the devil, operating on the limitations and weaknesses of man. But here, too, the indwelling Word was sustaining man, and was unveiling himself in history even as he was revealed through nature.
- (c) Thus the long warfare waged, seemingly between the devil and man, truly between the devil and the divine Word; man was the battle-field. At last, he who through the generations had upheld man and robbed Satan of his prey, came, as man, under his attack. Then the devil knew himself defeated.

II.—*His works.*

- (a) The conflict between the two principles of good and evil has been concluded in the persons of the protagonists; and the one saw the other as lightning fallen. But the engagements continue in the sphere of their works; the strongholds and the outworks have to be seized in the name of the Conqueror.
- (b) We view this conflict—this winding up of the campaign—ideally, whenever faith is confirmed by the contemplation of the Son of Man. As Truth we behold him overcome the strongholds of darkness, the intellectual perversion. He has marked as the Way the true path of mankind; and this because first he is become the Life of man, when in himself the death-blow was struck upon the devil and all his works.
- (c) We see the conflict in the world of history, in the sphere of experience, as we mark the victories of the Gospel over heathenism, and know that there is none other name under heaven of like power to his; or we witness the work of grace in the heart of man, and see the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ undoing the effects produced by the works of the devil.

III.—*The victory.*

- (a) The defeat of the devil in the sphere of human nature in the Person of the Lord Jesus is the victory of the life of grace. Mankind, deformed by irregular dispositions, habits and tempers, perverted and misdirected will, is the special scene of the routing of the devil and all his works. By grace ye are saved.
- (b) At present we see, and therefore for the most part we think of, a hard-wrought victory, partial indeed because of many wounds and damaged constitution. But his manifestation assures our hearts that here, too, we see now as it were through a mirror darkly. But in him we see man in the fulness of the divine purpose, untouched by the ravages of sin.
- (c) Because modern Christians insist upon approaching their faith from the side of man's knowledge rather than from the side of God's revelation, we form a low estimate of salvation, and think of it as an escape from consequences. The manhood of Jesus Christ, not yet even risen, bids us think of our true life in terms more spiritual than these; and the revelation of his Risen humanity gives us the conviction of the removal even of those limitations which belong to our present life of comparative dishonour (1 Cor. xv. 43).

Judgment Here and Hereafter

SIXTH TUESDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."—Heb. ix. 27.

"He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world."—Acts xvii. 31.

Picture: the final judgment of a life.

Resolve: to pray daily for a good death.

I.—Consider judgment.

- (a) Judgment is discrimination, distinguishing things which differ, and choosing the more excellent (Phil. i. 10, R.V. margin). How often instead of that discrimination which chooses the more excellent, we seize upon the less good and choose it for condemnation.
- (b) We are of necessity always judging, but not others so much as ourselves. Each discrimination is a self-testing. Consider how admirable it is seen to be in others, who choose the good for notice, rather than observe the evil: it is a revelation of their own Christian character. "Judge righteous judgment."
- (c) There can be no shrinking from the responsibility of discrimination. "Judge not, that ye be not judged" is no plea for the colourless life which has no character. It is a positive act ever to choose the good and leave the evil. Charity "taketh not account of evil" (1 Cor. xiii. 5).

II.—So, too, God is always judging.

- (a) His never-ceasing judgment is a corollary of the truth that he has not left the world to itself, but ever controls it and directs it to the consummation of his will. The divine discrimination ordereth all things. The Christian, while he is in the world, needs ever to remember this.
- (b) The divine judgment is manifested now in many ways; in the events of history, in the tendencies of the age, in the tone of society, in the experiences of the individual life, in individual character. In the light of the divine judgment, whatever is, is right. Nothing is what it is without his will; however perverse it may seem, it bears on it the Divine criticism.
- (c) There is danger in distinguishing too rigidly between the judgments of God, lest we think that his judgment is at present suspended. One is apt to distinguish between a particular judgment of God at the moment of death and the judgment of the great day; and thereby perhaps the judgment of that day in which he will judge the world has been largely evacuated of its meaning in the minds of many people. The eternal judgment is even now working; but the great day of judgment is not yet.

III.—Death and judgment.

- (a) Death is not a particular judgment by God summing up a life by balancing as it were its fors and againsts. At each moment the judgment acts, at each moment man is in life or in death. If man is to pass from one relationship towards God to another it must be by alteration of his state: but a state is an eternal condition. At this moment I am either in eternal life or eternal death.
- (b) It is probable that we shall judge ourselves at the moment of death; and certainly the hour of death ends our probation and fixes us irrevocably either in the state of grace and salvation or in that of the eternal loss of God. But in that state man has died; he has not to wait for an immediate and individual judgment pronounced upon it.
- (c) The general judgment is the manifestation before the eyes of the world, of that which has ever been before God, with whom the end is always present. It is God's justification of his ways to man. "Wisdom is justified of her children." We ought as Christians to have our faith thus fixed upon God that we see all things moving towards this consummation.

God's Children

SIXTH WEDNESDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. . . . And everyone that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."—1 S. John iii. 1, 3, R.V.

Picture: the heir to a title and estates, growing up to be worthy of his inheritance.

Resolve: to fix the mind on the gift of sonship and the capacity involved in it.

I.—*God's children.*

- (a) Consider our present condition of life as purgative, the holy dead as in the illuminative way, the blessed saints as entered upon the unitive life. The great purgation of present life is the opportunity which it provides of fixing the heart upon God by progressive unfolding of the life of sonship.
- (b) "*Called children.*" S. John reminds us that we are recognised and known to be such by the world. Consider this from the analogy of the child who inherits the blood and name of an ancient nobility; the nature is there, however it is hidden or perverted by misdirection; by that nature, with its possibilities, he is judged.
- (c) "*And such we are.*" The apostle pauses to reflect upon his own progressive experience of his divine sonship, as he has realized it by years of singleness of purpose and developing fellowship with the Father in loyal response. *Noblesse oblige* finds here its fullest interpretation.

II.—"*Behold what manner of love.*"

- (a) The life of sonship, with all that it has to give us, is just the opportunity of knowing love, responding to it, growing up into it, by concentrating life's purpose upon its Bestower. The adoption of sonship is this capacity to correspond to his love, to know the Father.
- (b) S. John's language is appropriate to his simile. He has said "Born of God," and now he pauses to realize this:—"Behold!" How often do we pass through stretches of life without realization of the manner of love which a Father has given us. Yet life's interpretation of a Father is the unfolding of sonship.
- (c) This love of the Father he has *bestowed upon us*. Here, too, the purgative way of this present life is the way of purity of heart, the singleness of purpose which appropriates the gift of Fatherhood, in the realized appreciation of which we are to be recognized as his children; "*called children of God.*" Grasp it as a gift and live upon it.

III.—*He "that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself."*

- (a) The singleness of aim, which is purity of heart, is based upon the hope which springs out of the nature of sonship through the gift of God. This hope is set on Christ through whom we have received the adoption, and who is the Christian's goal. "We know that if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him."
- (b) Personal effort is not neglected by S. John in this reading of his life's experience: the sonship thereby finds expression, he "*purifieth himself,*" and thus he sees God (S. Matt. v. 8). This effort is the responsive movement of the hope set on Christ through the working of the love bestowed and the nature given.
- (c) He adds "*Even as he is pure.*" Jesus Christ is the realization of the Christian's aspiration of sonship to express itself. The perfection of his earthly discipline still abides in his glorified state; "it was (so Greek) not yet manifested what we shall be," S. John says, as he recalls his sight of the Risen Lord. His words place before us the great stretches of progress which are before us, from glory to glory.

Work

SIXTH THURSDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it."—Gen. ii. 15.

Picture: Adam and Eve at work in the garden.

Pray: to consecrate your work to God.

I.—*The position of work in the divine economy.*

- (a) God works. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (S. John v. 17). The seventh day was hallowed to the Jews, because on it God did rest from all his works (Gen. ii. 2; Exod. xx. 11; Heb. iv. 4). This language, applied from the analogy of human work, which is fatiguing, represents to us the union of divine rest and work. We may mark his work in nature and in grace.
- (b) Man's work in the garden. It presents to us God's call on man in the natural system to co-operate with him. He is to dress and keep the garden of nature for God, whether the material or the intellectual. It is this which gives sacredness to what is called secular work. Do not apologize for it on the ground that some one must do it, but sanctify it as the work of God.
- (c) Man's spiritual work in co-operation with God, first to keep his own vineyard (see Cant. i. 6), and then to work in God's vineyard (S. Matt. xxi. 28). He who despises natural work will not be a good workman in the spiritual vineyard.

II.—*Some aspects of work.*

- (a) It is part of the higher endowment of unfallen man, which we retain. In work we put ourselves in harmony with man apart from sin, with the angels, with God himself. It is only the unproductiveness of work which is presented as the consequence of evil. Is not the disinclination to work a yet more obvious result?
- (b) God allows himself to share in this unproductiveness of work. Consider his work in grace. What expenditure for how little result! We do not feel at ease to think of his work as unproductive: we are conscious that this is only a partial view. Think thus also of one's own work, and be satisfied that no work, rightly done, is ever ultimately unproductive.
- (c) The work to which we look forward in eternity will be fruitful. The paradise of Eden is presented to us in the Apocalypse as a type of the paradise of heaven.

III.—*Some reflections upon work.*

- (a) Work is part of the scheme of merciful deliverance from evil. It helps to form discipline and character, to keep one out of mischief, and from idleness, which is itself evil. Work is a blessing, and when rightly undertaken is found to be congenial to the nature of man, and to his supremacy in creation.
- (b) But work also is a means of co-operation with God, if it be transfigured by being done to his glory. Do not divide rigidly between secular and sacred work. Work is one. The world of nature is no less God's world than the world of grace. Home and the business world—are there any fields of work which are more truly his vineyard?
- (c) Human life is an apprenticeship for heaven. There, too, his servants shall serve him. Some think of heaven as rest, others as work. It is both, for there work will be rest. Rest is not idleness, but the recuperation of exhausted powers, and in heaven there will be no need of recuperation. Physical and mental exhaustion belong solely to the present condition; spiritual exhaustion is not possible in the beatific vision. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be."

Jesus Unrecognized

SIXTH FRIDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"There standeth one among you, whom ye know not."—S. John i. 26.

Picture: the group of S. John Baptist's disciples, and Jesus unknown in the midst.

Resolve: to look for Jesus where I am least accustomed to expect him.

I.—*Consider the scene of John's disciples.*

- (a) In some states Jesus cannot even be said to be among you, although as yet unknown, but ready to be revealed. We must at least be the disciples of John, baptized with the baptism of repentance, and waiting for the revelation of the Christ to us.
- (b) But these disciples were expecting him, when already he was among them. There is a spiritual experience in which one is looking for the grace and blessing of Jesus Christ, when he is already there, and it is only needful that one rise up in his strength and go forward. Some look so much at their own weakness and unworthiness as not to realize that "My grace is sufficient for thee."
- (c) Even disciples preparing to be called to be the apostles of Christ may fail to know him as yet, when he is amongst them in spiritual experiences which they did not anticipate, and do not understand:—as dryness, depression, coldness in prayer, doubts of vocation.

II.—*The scene may be reproduced in many ways.*

- (a) Certain realms of thought may not yet have become Christian to us, Students are apt to distinguish rigidly between sacred and secular studies; men of business too often regard their work as secular, while yet they know it to be their duty. House-keepers often regret that they have no time for "Church-work," because they have their time fully occupied with home affairs.
- (b) In every case it is the intention which sanctifies, or which makes secular. Jesus Christ is standing in the midst of this duty, only he is not yet known. Seek for the revelation by doing all to the glory of God, and by looking upon "duty" as identical with "the will of God." Then take up God's will and do it, and offer the work to him, although it may not be the work that you would like to be doing.
- (c) Certain spiritual states. A danger to think in the hour of temptation that he cannot be present, and so we try to fight the temptation alone. He has not yet manifested his presence in temptation by revealing to us his power to overcome it in us. But he stands among us nevertheless.

III.—*Consider some suggestions from the scene.*

- (a) Non-recognition arises from failure to believe his words, "Lo, I am with you always." Look for his presence where you least expect to find it. Above all, in company where you perceive he is not welcome, see to it that he is with you as a companion. Often we behave cowardly because we think ourselves alone.
- (b) Look for him also in others. "Behold, all souls are mine" (Ezek. xviii. 4). He may be much hidden, but at least they are in his image: mostly his sign has been stamped on them: often he is only hidden from fear and shyness.
- (c) At least he will be discovered to you, if you look for him. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

The Christian Manna

SIXTH SATURDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"They did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan."—Exod. xvi. 35.

"And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land."—Josh. v. 12.

Picture: the Israelites feeding habitually on manna in the wilderness.

Pray: for more realization of the need of sacramental food.

I.—*The conditions of wilderness life.*

- (a) The communicant has to travel through his wilderness life in company with a mixed multitude (Numb. xi. 4). They provide a great danger when the first freshness of the manna food has passed off. Their great snare is that we too have come up out of Egypt with them, so that there is much in common between us.
- (b) Kibroth-Hataavah (Numb. xi. 34) is the grave of lapsed communicants who have fallen on the way-faring road, led away by the mixed multitude when the road has proved troublesome and monotonous. Pray for them. One does not need, however, any external snare: there will be found a veritable mixed multitude within the heart of the regenerate.
- (c) When the soul is wearied it easily forgets the toils of Egypt in the consciousness of present labour. The manna then becomes insipid beside the memory of Egypt's stronger foods (Numb. xi. 5, 6); and one may lose the taste for honey and sweet oil if one does not grow in appreciation of the Blessed Sacrament. Pray for perseverance.

II.—*Some conditions of reception.*

- (a) Strict conditions requiring obedience hedged the use of manna. Obedience, too, is a law of grace, by neglect of which the Blessed Sacrament may become to us not merely insipid but may even breed worms and stink (Exod. xvi. 20). Read 1 Cor. xi. 27-30.
- (b) Early gathering was the rule (Exod. xvi. 21). Pray that the young communicant may not fall away and need to be renewed: pray that the Bishops of the Church may encourage early confirmation. Consider further the value of communicating early in the day, as an act of obedience to the Church's practice of fasting communion, as an act of discipline and as an aid to devotion.
- (c) When the sun waxed hot the manna melted (Exod. xvi. 21), and on the Sabbath day it was not found (ver. 27). Here one may contrast and compare. The Blessed Sacrament is always available, unless through the negligence of God's priests: it is available even for those who have neglected it through the working days of life; and it is to be had during the burden and heat of the day. But neglected opportunities do not recur; many who have disregarded it in the morning of life find the way barred to it by invincible prejudice, callous indifference or scruple of conscience.

III.—*The wilderness and Canaan.*

- (a) It is a gift for the nourishment of daily life, and not for an act of occasional religious conformity (Exod. xvi. 35): the continual food of the wayfaring man. To be fed in the wilderness on food which is like honey and sweet oil is indeed wonderful.
- (b) But further it is a preparation for the food of Canaan, "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land . . . a land of oil, olive and honey (Deut. viii. 7-9). So it is fittingly called "The corn of heaven," "Angels' food" (Ps. lxxviii. 24, 25).
- (c) There remains to be tasted "the fruit of the land" (Josh. v. 12), when the manna will cease, and he that hath overcome shall eat of the hidden manna (Apoc. ii. 17).

Creation and Re-creation

SEPTUAGESIMA

"Behold, I make all things new."—Apoc. xxi. 5.

Picture: the creation: regeneration: the life of the world to come.

Pray: to live the new life in newness of spirit.

I.—*The vision of S. John.*

- (a) The material creation was a new thing, and God saw that it was good. The past has always powerfully impressed men's minds: their thoughts have been "of man's first disobedience." Only in these days of scientific influence are we beginning to look forward for the keystone of our thoughts. Behind the creation of our world lies God; behind the fall of man lies the origin of evil: the goal is not the return of the first creation, but the creation was the first stage in the process of the conquest of evil.
- (b) Nevertheless, in contrast with the heathen world, Jew and Christian have put their golden age in some sense in the future instead of in the past. Revealed religion provides hope's satisfaction in the conviction that God is accomplishing his purposes, and is still in his world. The believer looks forward to the triumph song, "Behold, I make all things new."
- (c) But the vision varies in each age. S. Paul looked in some degree to a universal Christianity spread over the universal Empire, although his vision was clouded by the presence of disorder and evil (2 Thess. ii.). S. John, living on into the age of persecution, saw no hope for the world. Creation must be repeated: "the friendship of the world is enmity with God." "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ," not by their gradual conversion, but by the entire upheaval of the sin-stained and corrupt Babylon. The vision was the only one conceivable to that age; yet God makes no mistakes, and he fulfils his purposes.

II.—*Spiritual fulfilment of the vision.*

- (a) The Incarnation involves the making of all things new, by the introduction into material life of the new Man, and the gift by him to man of a new principle of life.

"And that a higher gift than grace
Should flesh and blood refine,
God's presence and his very Self
And Essence all-divine."

- (b) The new birth incorporating into the society of the new Man, the Church, is the continual fruit of the Incarnation. It is not the world which is to be restored, but the Church is the true society of S. John's vision, and for it the world was created and redeemed.
- (c) The triumph of God's purposes. The world will never become the Church, but the Church will remain when the world has passed away, as the victory of God in the accomplishment of his purpose in creation, wherein it will have fulfilled the object of its existence.

"The world's no blot for us
Nor blank: it means intensely and means good."

III.—*The individual application of the vision.*

- (a) "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." The new man, the Christian, is to be daily renewed; to him it must be true that "Behold, I make all things new": the unregenerate life is to be mortified that "the new life may be raised up in him" (Bapt. of Infants).
- (b) A new intention sanctifies all life to him: "all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Hereby we use the world as not abusing it. When God is put first as the object of one's life, man is at length in the true position to understand the mind of God in creation, and to co-operate with his purposes.
- (c) Old things are becoming new in their power to sanctify life. Henceforth he calls nothing common or unclean. Common duties become new by the spirit in which they are taken up; temporal and material things become new in their reflection of the heavenly archetype; even dull and disagreeable things, suffering, and sorrow, in the light of the Divine Passion. "Behold, I will do a new thing . . . I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert" (Isaiah xliii. 19).

Foreign Missions

MONDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

"Because no man hath hired us."—S. Matt. xx. 7.

Picture: the idle hangers-on in the market.

Pray: for a universal stirring of Christian activity.

I.—*The state of the Jews.*

- (a) The parables of the kingdom spoken during the last stages of his ministry conveyed an unmistakable impression deeply resented by the Jews. Our Lord emphasized the ending of their exclusive prerogatives, and attacked their complacency. The Jews rested in the law, and were confident that they were leaders of the blind. All spiritual complacency is a strong sign of danger.
- (b) Some of the parables went even further, and accused the nation of misuse of their position, with the intimation that they were to be superseded by those whom they despised. This parable, however, does not go further than to describe their character as the reverse of that of the Divine householder. Something must be very wrong when the most religious thus pervert the mind of God.
- (c) In all ages of Christianity it is probable that a similar temper of mind might be discovered. It is the great sign of vitality that there is development and expansion; life is always stretching out. But a less vital religion tends always to spiritual cramping; sympathies are narrowed, the mind is confined. Religion, apart from the power of the Holy Ghost, has ever tended to sink into custom and tradition.

II.—*The problem of missions.*

- (a) The problem of the Gentiles throws great light on the whole study of missions. The divine purpose waited until the time came. A similar example of divine waiting is to be seen in the preservation among the Mohammedan races of ancient national types of Christianity, presenting a strong parallel to the present history of the Jews, waiting with a divine purpose.
- (b) There is the education of races. It is a commonplace to consider the fulness of the times for the advent of Christianity. We are, perhaps, too ready to think that all peoples ought to be converted in this generation. There are, however, occasions when the intellectual life of a great civilization and education points unerringly to the duty of the Church, as the awakening of China and Japan, and the national stirring of India.
- (c) But all missions are reminded by these thoughts of the duty to study the people to whom they address themselves. There is a scientific basis of missions, markedly illustrated by the varied treatment of S. Paul. The Church to-day must not only pray for the conversion of heathen, but for an intellectual zeal, for missionaries of the highest calibre; and prayer and self-sacrifice must be supplemented by study.

III.—*The call of missions.*

- (a) Such divine purpose cannot leave us purposeless in the face of ancient religions and civilizations. S. Paul, the Roman citizen, went forward to dare and to advance Christianity beyond its infancy into the conversion of the Roman Empire; and to do so with a determined policy and prudence which are not always to be found where zeal is most bold.
- (b) We thank God for S. Paul's conversion; our true gratitude is to follow in his steps. Have we even seriously grasped the conversion of the British Empire? Have we faced that Christianity can dare what commerce can? Have we realized that this is not the problem of the few, but the duty of the Church? Do we not stifle conscience by the reply that "no man hath hired us"?
- (c) Many Christians are content to hang about the market-place, idle; placing themselves, voluntarily, among the uncalled. Yet they have been hired by every Christian gift and influence to be pioneers in human life, realizing its scope as they respond to a calling which includes an abiding and stimulating voice within.

Discontent

TUESDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

"They murmured against the Goodman of the house."—S. Matt. xx. 11.

Picture: the evening payment in the parable.

Resolve: to watch myself against discontent.

I.—*The discontented in the parable.*

- (a) In the morning they were thankful to be put to anything rather than continue to be weary of idleness. At that time they had good resolves and great hopes of themselves. They agreed readily to the terms without considering their own steadfastness, whether they could remain contented, whether they could do a day's work, whether they could endure the heat.
- (b) The labours of the day tested them. The day was long enough to wear down superficial resolutions and intentions which had no depth. Their real willingness to work was thoroughly put to the proof, whether they could enjoy work for work's sake, for love of orderliness, for the honest purpose of earning their wages.
- (c) In the evening they were fatigued, and became envious against the master with whom they had been contented in the morning. Yet his liberality to others did not rob them. The labours of the day had tested their character and found it wanting; the payment at night revealed the character of the householder in favourable contrast.

II.—*Similar danger in life's work.*

- (a) In the early morning two tendencies conflict; idleness competes with the higher impulses of energy not yet trained into the steadiness of perseverance. Impulses are good, but they are too easily mistaken for confirmed principles; and when idleness prevails it is excused by lack of opportunity or a sphere of their own, or is explained by one's being in the wrong place.
- (b) The prime of life is the testing of these opposing elements in man's constitution. Work loses its dignity unless done in union with the divine will. Work is not in itself refreshing, but only when the spirit gains mastery over the more material nature which is being exhausted by labour. Otherwise the monotony of physical exertion reacts on the spirit and destroys its activity.
- (c) Then in old age comes fatigue. Old age is not the natural time for attention to the spiritual. Faculties, neglected during life's work, which was meant to cultivate them, are now dulled. Then comes discontent with God. The man has failed to read life's true purpose, which is not work but work in co-operation with God, work making for order and unity out of the disharmony of disordered nature.

III.—*Applications.*

- (a) The life of lives. In the morning—"Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" "Was subject unto them." In the day—"I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day." In the evening—"I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."
- (b) The material work of life. Begun with ambitions, continued from habit and of necessity, ended with a sense of profitlessness. The work has not been sanctified by the consecration of life to God.
- (c) The spiritual life. Lightly undertaken, without counting the cost or estimating one's unpreparedness for so high a task. Continued in the heat of the day, while God himself, who sent into the vineyard, is forgotten in the engrossment of work. Spiritual work becomes "my" work, and therein all the elements of discontent are moved to activity. In the evening one compares oneself with others, one's bad fortune with others' good fortune; one forgets that he was hired to work, and not hired to great rewards.

Delight in his Service

WEDNESDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

"Thou hast made them equal unto us."—S. Matt. xx. 12.

Picture : the parable.

Pray : that you may make his service your delight.

I.—*The parable.*

- (a) It was natural for the labourers in the parable to think as they did ; they were working for hire for a stranger bound to them by no ties but those of the purchase price of labour. They had no share in the fruits of the vineyard.
- (b) Yet even so their conduct was not very reasonable ; they had agreed upon the terms of labour ; the terms were reasonable ; and their wages were not docked in order that the short-timers should be paid. Discontented people are generally unreasonable.
- (c) Jesus Christ would teach the Jews that their inveterate jealousy of the Gentiles, who were called late into the vineyard of God's service, was embittering them against Almighty God. The Gentiles would not rob them of their terms of service, nor of their prerogative of having been first called.

II.—*A Christian counterpart.*

- (a) Christians, when temporarily out of touch with God, indulge in a similar murmuring. The missionary may contrast himself with those at home whose lot seems more easy ; the Christian struggling against opposition may feel jealous of those who live under more happy conditions. But God is not unrighteous, nor forgetful.
- (b) It would seem impossible that a Christian could ever complain of the eleventh-hour repentance of a deathbed : but one who has lived an outwardly mortified life may feel thus against Christians whose lives seem more happily spent. How sad to think that what is intended to be a fellowship with the Crucified One should sometimes be made a ground of complaint !
- (c) In spiritual depression the Christian is inclined to lay much stress upon spiritual favours, and to criticize God for withholding them from him. He cannot then trust God that not one favour is denied him which could with greater advantage have been given to him, that not one strain is laid upon him saving for his closer fellowship with God.

III.—*What the murmurer forgets.*

- (a) He forgets that the Christian's support in daily life is the fellowship of his divine Master. He makes himself for the time a hired labourer rather than a fellow-worker with God, delighting in his service. He forgets that the vineyard is his own home ; and yet he would not really rather be idle in the market-place. But in the stress of labour he forgets he is in the vineyard, and that not all the outsiders will be called.
- (b) He forgets the illimitable content of the penny, when he can cast an eye askance at the others who receive it, and grow jealous. If I have all that I can want, why should I be jealous that others have it also ? My happiness does not depend upon the loss of others ; there is more than enough in the divine penny to nourish one through the day of labour.
- (c) In this parable our Lord condescends to speak to us on our own level. We may remind ourselves that even to those who labour all the day the divine penny is truly a gift. Let the Christian remind himself that his real gain is the healthy work accomplished in the vineyard. To serve such a Master is its own reward. Let a healthy view of the divine service and the labour and heat of the day possess one as one draws near to Lent. Mortification will be of no value if it do not lead us to closer fellowship with, and happier knowledge of, the character and love of God.

Perseverance

THURSDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

"The last shall be first, and the first last."—S. Matt. xx. 16.

Picture: the great Assize under the figure of the parable.

Pray: for perseverance.

I.—*The words and the parable.*

- (a) The historical interpretation of the parable is that the Jews, first in the order of divine selection, will be surpassed by the Gentiles who are called in the later hours of the day. It may contain a suggestion that the Jews will not be cast away: the first are last, but although the parable does not hint it, the word "last" reminds one of the Pauline teaching of the late restoration after the time of the Gentiles.
- (b) In days such as ours, when Christianity in Europe seems so commonplace and trivial, there is encouragement that now as then the best is yet to come. The Christian west has taken the place of the Jew, and those of the eleventh hour will surpass us and be first. No faithful student of foreign missions will find this an impossible thought.
- (c) And the thought suggests further the better interpretation of Christianity at the end than at the beginning, an interpretation which finds a fuller unity in the better understanding of the life of Christ, and a wider perception of life through the contribution of those who are only now beginning to be called.

II.—*The last shall be first.*

- (a) Make a personal parallel to the difference between Jew and Gentile. The one who only later in life is called of God, or realizes for the first time the call of earlier life, does often surpass those who have been for a long time in the vineyard. We take the offer of service as a burden; they joy in it as the liberality of divine bounty.
- (b) So late called to the vineyard they work hard, and in good disposition make use of the tools which the Husbandman has provided. We too often grow slack in work, providing for ourselves many excuses, and despise the tools, allowing them to become useless through our careless misuse of them.
- (c) In the first great unfolding of the parable, the Gentiles became first through the eagerness with which they welcomed the persecutions which they suffered at the hands of the Jews and of the heathen. Is there perhaps a suggestion of a closing of this day of salvation in a new glory of martyrdom even more liberally bestowed?

III.—*The first shall be last.*

- (a) Who will deny the real difficulty of perseverance? It is the difficulty of our life, which is to correspond with the difficulty in the early days of Christianity, of changing one's faith, breaking away from one's friends, and the persecution of neighbours. Such a thought does not over-colour the real trial of perseverance.
- (b) Last, but not necessarily lost. The lack of perseverance need not mean death. There is nothing in the picture of this parable of the violence of the parable of the husbandmen (S. Matt. xxi. 33 ff.). Here they grumble, and the Master gives them—the wage of the hirelings which they have proved themselves to be; and he presses it upon them. The cramped spirit of grudging service has all but ruined them. God save us from this baseness!
- (c) And yet there is the darker side. "Many are called, but few chosen." This is true of Jew and Gentile; it is true of the idle in the world's marketplace, whether called early or late; it is true also of those in the vineyard. Lack of perseverance may find one at the end of the day rejected. By thy Cross and Passion, good Lord, deliver us!

Definiteness of Purpose

FRIDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

"*Lest that by any means.*"—1 Cor. ix. 27.

Picture : the ardent competition in a Corinthian running match.

Pray : for definiteness of purpose.

I.—Consider the application to the Corinthians.

- (a) S. Paul did not hesitate to preach the breadth of Christian liberty ; it is a dangerous truth if not Christianly held. But it is more fatal to be afraid of truth, and S. Paul would have been rejected as a false herald (in ver. 27 "preached" should be translated "heralded") if, knowing the freedom of the Gospel, he had hidden it from men. For that would not be to believe the Gospel, and it would have been an act of gross presumption,
- (b) But the Corinthians, through superficiality and self-satisfaction, received the liberty and did not fear for themselves. S. Paul, in this letter, has laid down two great principles of Christian life in relation to freedom. There is the law of charity ; others are to be considered, who may be weaker ; it is not necessary to use liberty to the uttermost in order to value it. And there is the law of self-discipline. These he calls the laws of edification and of expediency.
- (c) For particular reasons the apostle illustrates his subject from his own case. He was an apostle, and therefore was free to marry and to be supported in material matters by the Churches which he had founded. But he did not use his liberty ; there were others to be considered. Moreover, he would do something voluntarily, and there was always the possibility of his being a castaway.

II.—The simile.

- (a) Against the Corinthian complacency lay the imperative need of *strenuousness*, even as when a runner races against competitors and only one can get the prize, and that not such a prize as this one. We may well contrast the zeal of the athlete and the Christian ; with the former success is really desired : the Christian too often has only a feeble desire, and that merely to escape hell by the avoidance of grave sin.
- (b) Behind the strenuousness lies the *self-discipline* of the training. We, who will not even curb our appetite or deny our pleasure, will not even discipline ourselves to obey the directions of our Prayer-book, have seen again and again the careful training of the athlete persevered in according to rule.
- (c) By change of simile the apostle directs the thought towards the need of *definiteness*, and careful aim : the runner is become a boxer, and his opponent is himself. Man is his own worst enemy : he must place his blows skilfully, not missing aim ; and the boxer must not spare, but bruise his body and bring it into bondage. It is the life of direction, rule, and hardness.

III.—The herald-runner.

- (a) There are two great words in the New Testament for preaching : the one is to "herald," as John the Baptist (S. Matt. iii. 1), who went before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways ; the other is to "bring good tidings" (S. Luke ii. 10 and iv. 18, R.V. and marg.). S. Paul uses the former here, agreeably to the simile. But he was not thinking necessarily or exclusively of preaching. Every effective Christian life is such a herald-preparation of the way.
- (b) When he regarded the possibility of his rejection, it is less probable that he was thinking of being disqualified for false heralding than that he had in mind the truth that in this case the herald also had to run in the race. He would be rejected as a runner, even though he had heralded, if, while he prepared others for the running, he did not prepare himself ; if, while he started others on the race, he did not himself run perseveringly to the end, able through self-discipline to maintain his pace to the last.
- (c) In his last Epistle the aged apostle looked back upon his life under a similar double simile. "I have fought the good fight ; I have finished the course" (2 Tim. iv. 7). When the course of life was all but run, Almighty God gave to his loyal herald the grace of assurance : it is no longer "lest I, myself, should be a castaway" ; but "henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness" : an incorruptible crown indeed.

God First

SATURDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

"In the beginning God."—Gen. i. 1.

Consider the words of S. Augustine, that every action may be said to have a body and a soul; the body is as it were its substance, and the soul its intention.

Resolve: to make good intentions with one's actions.

I.—*Temporal and eternal.*

- (a) In the beginning God created. Time and space are temporal; that which most obtrudes itself upon attention is not the most enduring: "The things which are seen are temporal," etc. "For the world passeth away, and the fashion thereof, but the Word of God abideth for ever."
- (b) "In the beginning was the Word . . . the Word was God." The spiritual is the eternal, the timeless, the ever-present and abiding. Compare, therefore, the value of the two; they are like shadow to substance. God pervades all things: he may be found in the works of his hands, but he is not to be confounded with them. We must seize the eternal in the temporal, the spiritual in the material.
- (c) By a pure intention man can free himself from the temporal and material, through which intention he, made of the dust of the earth, is to realize his affinity with God, being made in his image. "Unto thee lift I up mine eyes."

II.—*In the beginning.*

- (a) Evil lies behind the world of our material experience. Sin is not the result of creation, but the perversity of intention; it became when first the spiritual creations of God did not will "in the beginning God," but some smaller lower will of their own.
- (b) Men speculate whether the Son of God would have become man had not sin entered this universe. It is more profitable to consider that the purpose of God in the creation of this world, and involving the purpose of the Incarnation, was to frustrate evil. This universe is the first movement on the part of God, which is manifested to us, in the conquest of evil.
- (c) Such a view of the gospel of creation gives an illuminative interpretation of the depressing problems of life, its sorrows and sufferings; and this view is confirmed by the revelation of the suffering Redeemer subjected to the laws of human nature and the conditions of human life. The strain of life is the working out of the conquering conflict of the eternal over the temporal, the spiritual over the material.

III.—*In the beginning God.*

- (a) For us there are two beginnings: the first one links us with the continuity of the divine purpose, the second unites us with the divine accomplishment; we call them the first and second births. Reflect upon the dignity and responsibility of human life, as having a rational part in co-operating with the divine conquest of evil. Yet man often abuses his grace in creation, and denies the grace that bought us.
- (b) By neglecting the truth of "in the beginning God" man often in his thoughts practically puts creation first, and then introduces God by the way to remedy the history of human nature. In this way he makes God his servant, rather than exalts him above all things and ourselves as servants to him who is before all things, the Master and Interpreter of all life.
- (c) The unprofitableness of life is not according to the will of God. It is by making our intentions trifling that we degrade life to a trifle, so that even deadly sin often ceases to have much horror for us. Put God first, and life is not petty but eternal; and the Son of Man is the victory of our faith, the conquest of evil through conflict.

Little Sins

SEXAGESIMA

"Some fell by the wayside."—S. Luke viii. 5 and cp. 12.

Picture: a path trodden across the cornfield by many passers-by; birds hovering above during the sowing, pick up the seeds.

Resolve: to think more seriously of little sins.

I.—*The effect of carelessness in venial sins.*

- (a) The path was made by the many passers-by. It was ploughed up like the rest of the field, but there was a right of way established, and the continual traffic soon made a hardened path, although each person made very little impression. The passers-by over the ploughed field of the heart are light worldly distractions and the like.
- (b) The path once begun to be made encourages others to use it. A habit of superficial lightness and distraction is formed by the recurrence of acts. From such repeated acts comes at last an inability to receive the seed deeply into the heart; it stays on the surface.
- (c) So at length comes a hardened state of the heart, not from any wilful hardening, but unconsciously. The end of trifles is that the heart cannot remain receptive. Observe that not any number of venial sins make up a mortal sin, but that they predispose to it.

II.—*The common character of Satan's wiles.*

- (a) The birds pick off the seeds. Who could suspect them of doing harm? What can one bird do? What does one seed matter? All looks so innocent and harmless. And as a matter of fact, the birds are only following their instinct. It is their nature to pick up seed. The fault is not in the birds but in the nature of the ground.
- (b) But yet the parable says, "Then cometh the devil." So it is in the application of the parable, and the contrast between the birds of the field and the devil is the point for reflection. He comes in so natural a guise that we do not recognize him, and we say to ourselves, "This is nothing." "Surely this does not matter." "It does not do to be over-scrupulous."
- (c) Mark further that he only comes in this guise because the circumstances are favourable to it. Temptation frequently comes in the form in which it is least easily recognized as temptation. And further, that dangers to the spiritual life do not belong only to one stage of its history. The parable illustrates other experiences as well as this one.

III.—*"Lest they should believe and be saved."*

- (a) It is the character of superficial carelessness to think lightly of itself, and to be unobservant of consequences. Thus by the constitution of man he hardens his heart through his own inattention. But the severe judgment on this traffic of the many passers-by over the field of the heart sounds in the ears with terrible severity. It is not fatalism, but divine judgment. The heart should have remained sensitive and receptive.
- (b) This carelessness in guarding the heart from the distractions which gradually harden it is, rightly viewed, a gross disrespect against God. Some sins are wilful rebellion, others are outrageous insult or fierce defiance. But repeated acts of slight disrespect are not to be regarded as trifles when the disrespect is against God.
- (c) And such conduct is of the nature of the profanity of Esau (Heb. xii. 16, 17), who looked not to consequences, but seized what he desired at the moment without thought of the spiritual character of his birthright. Then, when later he sought his blessing, he could not obtain it.

No Fruit to Perfection

MONDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA

"And bring no fruit to perfection."—S. Luke viii. 14.

Picture: the ground in which the good seed is sown.

Resolve: preparation for Lenten rule.

I.—*Three states of Christian life.*

- (a) No fruit. The seed was good. But on the rocky ground it could gain no substantial entry; there was a superficial surface of earth, and the seed sprang up quickly through the thin earth, heated by the rock below it, and as quickly withered. There was no depth. On the down-trodden path, hardened by habit, it could find no entry: the very earth had changed its character, and only hard digging could restore it.
- (b) No fruit to perfection. Rough, unprepared soil: the old tares only levelled to the ground, not plucked up; they grow up again speedily, taking up the nourishment of the soil, and squeezing out the corn. It is the double life of partial conversion: some poor straw is produced, and a few thin ears, but nothing worthy of the good seed.
- (c) Matured fruit. It has fallen into the soil of an honest and good heart. Even here there are degrees: some soil responds more favourably than others. This is a spiritual problem of which the solution is not known: for it is not merely that weather may be more or less suitable with wind and sun and rain, but also that some soil is naturally richer than others. There are degrees of spiritual capacity; the sower may be better pleased with thirtyfold in some ground than with sixtyfold in another.

II.—*Among the thorns.*

- (a) This is in the mixed ground; the seed has to struggle for life with rough competitors. The Master of the parable names three, which are continually making the seed almost a failure. There are cares: these were in the soil; they make the seed to be withered, being choked by the mass of heavy growth, so that the young blades cannot get into the fresh air and sunlight.
- (b) Riches is another species of thorn: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" In all these cases mark that it needs no birds of the air to pick up the seed; the evil arises from within, out of the heart. The root of the evil—love of riches—ought to have been plucked up. The good seed brooks no rival claimant: it will take all the strength of the ground for its proper development: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God."
- (c) Pleasures. One might have likened the birds to these; but they are described as thorns. Once again mark that it is the love of pleasure, that which is within, and not the outside pleasures which do the harm. Out of the heart proceed all these evils, which act more slowly but so surely. It is only the very hard ground, worn down by continual treading, which is at the mercy of the chance birds.

III.—*No fruit to perfection.*

- (a) Consider the limited power of the gospel. Sometimes it can gain no entry, at others only a passing ineffectual lodging; often it has no room to develop in a ground already occupied. It is well to remember that the preparation of the heart is from the Lord. May this Lent prove to be a real enriching of the ground, which every year must be gone over. If some spend their life on the ground with spade work, and neglect to put in seed, there are others who overstock with seed, and see not whether the ground can nourish it.
- (b) The hardened path must be ploughed up by examination and confession; the superficial ground must be improved by devotion, bringing new and good soil upon it; the whole land must be diligently cleared of stones, and the old tares must be pulled up by the roots, until the ground is purged.
- (c) Consider what shame to the Sower when his good seed does not produce a good crop. What ingratitude to receive his seed into ground which will give it no fair opportunity! What future grief when the harvest is come and there is nothing but poor straw or blighted ears, when on another field the same seed has multiplied itself, and brought honour to the Sower!

Sarcasm

TUESDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA

"For ye suffer fools gladly."—2 Cor. xi. 19.

Consider: some sins of the tongue due to pride of intellect.

Resolve: against sarcasm (or intellectual conceit).

I.—*Consider the words.*

- (a) Some have even supposed the words to be an apostolic command. Truly, if one were filled with the wisdom which the Holy Ghost imparts, one would bear more patiently with the limitations, intellectual and spiritual, of others; and in humility, quite unconsciously, seeing that one would not be aware that one was wise.
- (b) But so far from S. Paul using these words as a command, they convey a terrible irony. He has felt himself humiliated that their rebellious conduct has compelled him to defend himself, and to lay bare his heart before them; he is obliged to write foolishly, and they must bear with him in this (2 Cor. xi. 1). He reminds them that they are allowing his opponents to domineer over them and to enslave them; much more, then, should they tolerate his foolish boasting (xi. 19, 20).
- (c) The justification of this language is in the character of the Corinthians, and in the temper of S. Paul, who, if almost beside himself in these chapters (x.-xiii.), is genuinely seeking the recovery of the Judaizing Church, and is not finding a vent for hurt feelings or an occasion for revengeful stab.

II.—*Applied to the Corinthians.*

- (a) S. Paul's irony should have struck home, for his readers were particularly self-satisfied that they were wise. Intellectually conceited, they had not sufficient depth of spiritual character to grasp the gospel. Thus they had found no essential place for a revelation of the Cross (1 Cor. i. 22-24 and ch. ii.), which was in opposition to their worldly mind (see also 1 Cor. iii. 18, 19).
- (b) While proud of their superiority and wisdom, they were in truth superficial. Their boast of knowledge had already brought rebuke upon them (1 Cor. viii. 1), and they could be deluded by quibbles into defending a marriage which was against even heathen morals. Apollos had discovered that their attachment to him was really due to his natural gifts, and, consequently, he had refused to revisit them as yet (Acts xviii. 24, 27, 28; 1 Cor. ii. 1; iii. 4; xvi. 12).
- (c) Thus they were a ready prey to the Judaizers. Since they flattered themselves, they were open to flattery. No one hitherto had played upon this weakness, and they were so self-satisfied that they mistook the patronizing tone and the disparagement of S. Paul as a just estimate of their superiority.

III.—*Intellectual fruits of moral defects.*

- (a) Truly, the Corinthians were intellectually alive, and they should have been impervious to the wiles of these teachers. But spiritual defects of character are quite capable of warping the judgment and of twisting the intellect. Prejudice, for example, is not the peculiar prerogative of devout Christians; it is to be found also among men of moral obliquity or of intellectual pride.
- (b) So it came to pass that these Corinthians, through the flattery of their self-satisfaction, were surrendering the liberty which is in Christ for a subservience to men who were still living in the half-shadows when the full light had come; they were surrendering the true philosophy for a mangled form of Christianity.
- (c) With this serious defect of the Corinthian character in one's mind, turn again to the use and danger of irony, a favourite indulgence of those who like to think themselves clever and smart. Is there no risk of moral damage to one's self in its indulgence?

Full Use of One's Gifts

WEDNESDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA

"So am I." "I am more."—2 Cor. xi. 22, 23.

Consider: the Jewish prerogatives of S. Paul.

Play: that one may use to the full one's advantages.

I.—Consider the Blessed Mother.

- (a) All that S. Paul said she might say. Of godly Jewish parents, nurtured in piety, the recipient of heavenly salutation, the secret bearer of Divine life, the Mother of Our Divine Lord; she felt his first kiss, shared his childish confidences as the infant mind expanded, tended him, enjoyed his unselfish love.
- (b) But "I am more." We recall these privileges that we may heighten the picture. S. Paul's "more" were his persecutions, sufferings, and labours. What shall we think of her "more," in the later years when she rose by grace to those highest flights of surrendering him to his public duties, of watching without murmur his increasing danger, of seeing him led to death?
- (c) Many Christians to-day have most devout reflections about the blessed Mother. We may thank God for this, if such recognition of her chosen lot lead us to realize the power of grace, and to imitate her virtues. But how often we stop at the "so am I" of privileged position, and neglect the "I am more" of the whole-hearted response!

II.—Consider S. Paul.

- (a) He has enumerated here and elsewhere his privileges. Some of them proved the great opportunities of his life, as his intimate knowledge of Judaism, and the spiritual power of it; some of them helped to his emancipation, as the realized struggle of attempting to find spiritual satisfaction within the bounds of the Judaism of his age; others provided the great opportunity of renunciation, as family position and possessions.
- (b) It is of great value to consider that all advantages in life, social, educational, material, are so many opportunities for a wider and stronger display of Christianity. Where any of these advantages do not exist, there lies the opportunity of converting a hindrance into a great act of union with the will of God, making the "so am I" into an "I am more."
- (c) But here S. Paul's "I am more" ignores such thoughts as are hinted at in Phil. iii. His "more" is not a renunciation which has been more than repaid by the gain of Christ, but the perils and pains of the life which has followed upon it. He has not demanded a spiritual luxury for his initial sacrifice; but ignoring it he has sought his "more" to keep some sort of pace with the gift of Christ daily realized.

III.—The secret of your own life.

- (a) In the depths of the secret examination, what is my "so am I"? Has opportunity and privilege been turned to such use that I can believe that, like S. Paul, I have been set apart from my mother's womb? Can I in any way see, by the manner in which all such advantages have proved of Christian use, that Almighty God prepared them for me with a purpose?
- (b) What is my "more," whether of renunciation or of endurance? Two types are put forward in this meditation: the faithful mother moving in the sphere of home duty, and the daring evangelist going forth into the world of opposition: either type will suggest appropriate considerations.
- (c) Of the deep mystery of the spiritual life of the holy Mother nothing is revealed: all the life is summed up in one word of womanly surrender—"Be it unto me according to thy word." But S. Paul has shown us many glimpses. It was to win Christ. To the apostle he was most precious: he found him so precious because he proved the power and joy of his presence. That is the Christian life.

Qualifications of Service

THURSDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA

"Are they ministers of Christ? I am more."—2 Cor. xi. 23.

Consider S. Paul, the apostolic missionary, as the inspiration of all who would work for God.

Resolve: to pay more heed to the qualification of service.

I.—*Endurance* (23-27).

- (a) In this passage S. Paul illustrates some of the marks of the minister of Christ. Endurance is one of them. It marks the genuine singleness of purpose of the Christian worker. Many think they would like to work for him, when they only seek their own self-importance; they work for themselves, for the pleasure of success, for love of leadership, for the pleasing sensation of being approved and appreciated. Such fail in the test of endurance; when the work involves what does not please them they give it up.
- (b) It marks stability, without which God, with whom it is impossible to trifle, cannot be served. He is not to be flattered and patronized by an offer of service; a particular censure is attached to him who looks back after putting his hand to the plough. Some tire in God's service. One should consider first the greatness of working for God, and whether one can do so.
- (c) The only guarantee of endurance is to cultivate hardness. It behoves the dignity of working for God that one should qualify for it. It is not anybody and still less is it any one in any condition, who is fitted to serve a king. We train for years to become proficient in business; the artist is not one with an aptitude and who dabbles in paints. Is the work of the Christian minister, the visitor, the teacher, less serious?

II.—*Fellowship* (28).

- (a) It is not a sentiment, but a reality, and often necessarily a very burdensome one. The fellow-worker with God cannot go to his work as from the outside. When the Son of God came down to save us he first became one of us. This involved his Passion. His disciple Paul knew "the care of all the Churches."
- (b) The worker feels this fellowship as a responsibility and not as a means of gain. He would realize fellowship by seeking to fulfil its obligations, not by laying himself out to receive sympathy. When asked by one "Who is my neighbour?" the Master said, "Go and do thou likewise."
- (c) In spiritual matters we always have to do and to be what God makes us. Grace requires response. We shall realize the fellowship for ourselves by acknowledging it towards others. The lack of enthusiasm in Christian fellowship is largely the lack of the exercise of it. No gift is for isolated enjoyment.

III.—*Sympathy* (29).

- (a) This is the true appreciation of fellowship: it is the realization within oneself of that which fellowship embraces as one's own. Much so-called sympathy fails utterly, because the patronage of pity is substituted for it; we are not weak with the weak, but only sorry that they are not so strong as we.
- (b) Therefore, sympathy forgets itself. The fellow-worker does not consider himself; individualism is the denial of fellowship. Sympathy is bred in us by the hardness of endurance, whereby we learn our own weakness; it is by pleasing ourselves that we lose the power of sympathy, because we encourage ourselves to think of ourselves.
- (c) A great foundation of sympathy is laid in the worker's private fellowship with God. Does he humble himself there? Get to know his own weakness? Let him learn, too, to practise unselfishness with God, and to dwell upon his undeserved favours, and thank him reverently for them. Then he has a heart at liberty for the sorrows and burdens of others.

Sin's Deceit

FRIDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA

"Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."—Heb. iii. 13.

Picture: the deception of Adam and Eve. "The serpent deceived me, and I did eat." (See 2 Cor. xi. 3.)

Resolve: not to close the heart to God's voice, if he speaks "to-day."

I.—*Lest any of you.*

- (a) The warning is the more grave to us Christians than to the Israelites of old by reason of the greatness of God's message to us. This is the lesson drawn by the writer from all that he has hitherto said in the Epistle. God spake formerly through the prophets, but now through a Son, "therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed." Hence the emphasis, "*lest any of you*" Christians, in contrast with previous generations of Israelites.
- (b) Lest. There is the danger of not hearing, or of mishearing the voice of God: it is amply illustrated by the history of Israel "in the day of temptation in the wilderness," and in their later history, as the author of Ps. xev. saw, and as the writer of this Epistle knew (Heb. iii. 7 ff.).
- (c) Lest any. By reason of the danger to each individual there is the corporate obligation upon the Church to exhort one another during the "to-day" of opportunity, while as yet God may speak.

II.—*Hardened.*

- (a) The illustration is from the potter's clay. When the heart is soft it is pliable and God can mould it: when it is hardened it has received its permanent form. But the hardening is a process, and can be arrested before it is complete.
- (b) Of Pharaoh it is said both that God hardened his heart (Ex. iv. 21) and that he hardened his own heart (Ex. viii. 15). So S. Paul says, "whom God wills he hardens" (Rom. ix. 18), and here the apostle says that it is the deceitfulness of sin which hardens. The Christian faith is full of such superficial contradictions: conscience settles them. S. Paul hints at the awful truth which unifies them: "and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind" (Rom. i. 28).
- (c) There is a possibility of final hardening: there is a limit, a "to-day" during which God may speak. Judas suffered this final hardening when he gave way to despair. When God hardens it is not that he ceases to be merciful, but that his mercy can no more take effect upon the hardened substance of the heart.

III.—*The deceitfulness of sin.*

- (a) This view of sin does not remove its guiltiness: the words of the meditation base a serious warning upon it; it says, "Beware of deception." Reason from daily life: we do not excuse the deceived from censure; he was careless or stupid or wilful. Moreover, we have supernatural aid to keep the heart from being deceived.
- (b) Deceit is an essential characteristic of sin. If sin showed itself as it is, all would scout it. It comes disguised, and it hides the issues of it. This is true in each instance; still more true is it of many habits and practices, as tempers, states of mind, omissions, etc. It deceives often by plausible excuses: duties are not absolute, they can be postponed, or are counter-balanced by other duties.
- (c) Sin often deceives as to the satisfaction to be found in it: pleasant to the taste, but its after-bitterness is hidden. It deceives as to the excuse to be found for it: a little sin and others do it, human nature is weak. No doubt Judas made many excuses to himself. It deceives as to the probability of punishment: "I have done it before, and nothing came of it: judgment is a long way off, there is time for repentance: God is merciful." And thus it forms a habit of being deceived, and so hardens,

The Bruised Heel

SATURDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA

"Thou shalt bruise his heel."—Gen. iii. 15.

Picture: (1) The man treading on a serpent's head to crush it is wounded in the heel. (2) The Crucifixion.

Resolve: not to shrink from the mortification of self-discipline.

I.—*The seed of the woman is Christ.*

- (a) A distant prophecy of Christ the Son of Man accomplishing in himself and then in his people the divine issue of this enmity. In the bruising of the heel, mistake not suffering for defeat, but see in it rather the conditions of victorious fighting.
- (b) Satan's power was over the heel, the lowest part. He was permitted to bruise in Jesus the human body and to inflict suffering on the human nature; but no power was given him over the head, the seat of will and intellect; nor over the heart, the seat of the affections. On the Cross both sides of the picture are seen to be fulfilled, for there Satan's head was bruised.
- (c) The heel of Christ was bruised by the serpent because he was the seed of the woman, identified with us in nature and sympathy. While his human nature remained uncontaminated by the serpent's poison, it was not unattacked; nor in putting forth his power to crush Satan's head was his own heel spared.

II.—*The Church.*

- (a) Satan has entered into the new Paradise with his poison. We see the effects of the poison in the loss of unity and the weakening of the power to perceive the voice of truth and obey it. But only the heel is bruised. The Church limps on her heel as she goes slowly, but the head—the intellectual voice—and the heart—her emotions—are true. She is one, and her voice is there, but the manifestation thereof is obscured.
- (b) In the Church Satan's head is bruised. The Church is Christ ever on earth in conflict with Satan, defeating his wiles and devices. The Church is not his kingdom; he can only thwart her in the heel. His head lies crushed beneath the divine heel of Christ's Passion.
- (c) And like her Master, it is for the Church ever to have her heel well on the serpent's head, suffering the pain there of his bruise, in mortification, persecution, opposition of the world. When the Church conforms herself to the world, let her beware that the loss of pain in the heel sets Satan free to attack her in a more vital part.

III.—*The Christian.*

- (a) In Christ each Christian is the seed of the woman of whom the promise was given. It involves perpetual conflict of the bitterest character, with the pledge of victory through suffering. The unmortified life has no bruising of the heel; neither has it its heel on the serpent's head.
- (b) Suffering is a mark of victory. In Christ Satan has no power over the disciple except in the heel which is put forth to crush him. It is the will which moved by the Spirit of God puts forth the heel and keeps it on the serpent's head: but the part bruised is the heel; Satan cannot touch the will save through the pain in the heel.
- (c) And the heel is the lower part of man, which contracts defilement as he walks. Bruise Satan's head with that, by mortifying the carnal affections. He who shrinks from this is removing a sure guarantee that he has Satan's head bruised in the dust,

The Duty of Love

QUINQUAGESIMA.

"This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."—S. John xv. 12.

Picture: the good Samaritan.—"Go and do thou likewise."

Resolve: The spirit of Lent: there is no true mortification without charity (1 Cor. xiii. 3).

I.—*The importance of brotherly love.*

- (a) It is placed together with loving God as the first commandment, and the sum of life's duty. It is put before us as a preliminary to loving God (1 S. John ii. 9; iv. 20). Life is for the Christian not a self-centred cultivation, but an expansion, discipline, and progress through fellowship.
- (b) Love is a going out of self into the lives of others. And this is the essence of the divine revelation. God sent forth his Son because he so loved the world. The Son gave his life a ransom for the many. The Holy Spirit strives with man, submits to be grieved by him, helps his infirmity.
- (c) The service of man is part of the worship of God. "By him—Jesus—therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving praise to his name. But to do good and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. xiii. 15, 16).

II.—*The comprehensiveness of love.*

- (a) Study it in the Epistle. It includes patience, kindness, generosity, humility (ver. 4), courtesy, unselfishness, good temper, guilelessness (ver. 5), love of what is true (ver. 6), endurance (ver. 7).
- (b) All these graces must have their roots in love, if they be not affectations. Love will make us patient with one another; impatience is selfishness. It is easy to be pleased with another's fault, from jealousy or spiritual pride; but when we thus rejoice against him, he is not in our minds a brother. Why can we endure more from one than from another, except that our sphere of love is narrow?
- (c) Or consider the wide sphere of love's activity: "My neighbour" and "the brethren." There is no place in the New Testament for abstract love of humanity. Everybody is either my brother or my neighbour. Thus love is not presented to us as a sentiment, but as a duty, because of the unity of man in redemption (1 S. John iv. 11; S. John xiii. 1). So "Love your enemies"; the duty is not relaxed when it is not reciprocal; for the duty is not based on the equality of return, but on a divinely established relationship.

III.—*Love is a grace.*

- (a) Reflect that it has many specious counterfeits: amiability, good manners, indifference, weakness. But love is active, strong, disciplined, and principled. Love is not the absence of dislike, but the energy of a duty which is often against natural inclination, and requires much grace for its performance.
- (b) Love requires cultivation. It is presented as a duty, to be done; and the feeling can come through the doing. By continued acts the habit is acquired. The grace to do it can only come through the free use of grace: "Grace for grace." But one of the important fruits of a good communion is infused charity.
- (c) Meditate on the duty. Our neighbour is, together with ourselves, the object of God's love; one family, one Church, one household of God. Our neighbour is, like ourselves, under the obligation to love. If we fail in love we tempt him, by putting an obstacle in his way. Only by divine love have we ourselves any hope of the divine mercy.

Perplexity at his Hard Words

MONDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA

"And this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken."—S. Luke xviii. 34.

Picture: the disciples perplexed at his hard words.

Pray: for grace to penetrate into the difficulties of experience.

I.—Consider the divine purpose.

- (a) Almighty God works for larger purposes and wider issues than we see; therefore much must be unintelligible to us now, not because it is irrational, but because our experience does not enable us to see far enough to grasp its purpose.
- (b) Learn the value of penetration, by reverently waiting upon him in hard matters, whether spiritual or intellectual. "My soul hangeth still upon God." Prayer solves many mysteries of grace, and of God's dealings; and prayer makes us wait with patience. Once the disciples were afraid to ask him what they did not understand (cf. S. Mark ix. 31, 32, with S. Luke xviii. 31); this was a mistake. To ask is to be able to receive some answer.
- (c) One great way to penetrate into what is as yet hidden is to follow him closely in what is already revealed to me. Almighty God is known through obedience. Do not be impatient to know, but to obey. Once the Holy Virgin did not understand her Son, but she kept all these sayings in her heart. Peter did not understand him, and by rashness brought rebuke upon himself (cf. S. Matt. xvi. 21-23).

II.—Consider some applications.

- (a) There are revelations of divine love which we do not understand: how terrible his love is; how exhaustless and never to be abused; what demands it makes upon those who receive it in abundance. We have penetrated very little as yet into the duty of love and its never-failingness. These things are all hidden until we can receive them through growing in love.
- (b) The mystery of the Passion in its many-sidedness: its revelation of God, of ourselves, of sin's punishment; its relation to forgiveness and the unfathomable depths of atonement: the demands upon us to follow in the way of the cross. These mysteries await our growth in penitence, and our development in discipleship. We must take up the cross before we can hope to understand it.
- (c) The problem of Matthias stepping into the place of Judas. What is the meaning of Judas' call to the discipleship and his collapse? The problem is repeated before our eyes daily. Is it not a sample of the many things which are hidden from us, teaching us to walk by faith and not by sight?

III.—Consider some reflections.

- (a) This was not the first occasion on which he had revealed his Passion to them; but he was not impatient because they did not enter into his words. He has great and Godlike patience with us. But they had seen him continually misunderstood and hated by the religious leaders; surely that part of his words which spoke of coming death should have been painfully clear to them; but they were engrossed in his acts of kindness, and with their own relation to him in affection.
- (b) After Pentecost they understood both his crucifixion and his resurrection in fuller and spiritual understanding. In many ways we are on the further side of our Pentecost, and are walking by sight; we want to see what God is doing with and around us. In some matters we have come to understand what was hidden formerly; may that give us strength to walk more by faith!
- (c) It is not only by reason of our dulness that he hides the meaning of his words from us. Often it is hidden in mercy. Should we dare to face the future if we foresaw the failures which in his will lie in front of us, failures like the failure of his Cross, if his Cross be on our lives? It is not merely that we do not know; it is also that his sayings are hid from us.

Preparedness for Lent

SHROVE TUESDAY

"Behold! we go up to Jerusalem."—S. Luke xviii. 31.

Picture: the scene.

Resolve: a good Lenten rule.

I.—*The preparation for Lent.*

- (a) "We who are justly punished for our offences" (Septu.). Consider the offences: although forgiven, face them, and do not abuse forgiveness by making it an excuse for not thinking of the offences. Regard the justice of punishment; acknowledge the offences. And punished; what punishment has the forgiven sinner received? Is he to make progress without remedial punishment?
- (b) "We put not our trust in anything that we do" (Sexa.). What do we do that we can think to put our trust in? The collect is a farce to us if we are not doing so much that the devil may tempt us to put our trust in it. The interpretation of the clause lies in the Epistle: consider, therefore, last week's meditations, and examine closely for self-satisfaction.
- (c) "All our doings without charity are nothing worth" (Quinq.). All our worship and prayers, all the daily actions of our lives, we are telling God in this week's collect to be nothing worth without love, love of Him and of our neighbour. Do we not need Lent? Let us go up to Jerusalem, to see the punishment of sin, to learn where to put our trust, to see love.

II.—*The practices of Lent.*

- (a) Penitence is the spirit of sorrow for forgiven sin, the spirit in which one desires and can profit by remedial punishment. Appreciate forgiveness in such wise as to pray God for anything that may curb the power of sin. This cannot be without the diligent practice of penitence. What, then, shall be my Lenten penitential acts?
- (b) Mortification is the remedy, as also very largely the temptation, for putting trust in anything that we do. Some avoid mortification, lest they should put their trust in it. Others mortify themselves, and are self-complacent thereat. But let mortification be built upon penitence; let it be because it is so necessary for me, especially if I am a fellow-worker.
- (c) Devotion. The Epistle for this week is the Pauline interpretation of love. It is the ideal Christian in his life with his fellow-men. In God alone shall we learn this love. To love men apart from God will not attain to enduring all things, bearing all things, hoping all things. Only in God, too, will one learn to lose that self which is the obstacle to love.

III.—*The spirit of Lent.*

- (a) The Lenten fast is no grudging burden imposed by the tyranny of the Church. We fast in penitence, we fast in humility and self-distrust, we fast in the spirit of love. Consider the Lenten fast in relation to penitence; it is a penance: it is a penance in union with the Passion of our Saviour. Fasting and prayer are conjoined, and almsgiving makes the trio; here again are the three thoughts of the meditation.
- (b) The ruin of love is selfishness; hence we need mortification to destroy it. Learn to deny self. It is easy to make a resolution to deny self, but how am I going to *do* it? Lent provides the occasion for varied practical exercises. And consider that the principle of obedience helps to eradicate self. Do not seek for fancy rules when obedience provides a rule of Lent, if able to obey it, and obedience provides a dispensation if not able.
- (c) Fasting from food is only profitable where there is fasting from sin, and the heart draws near to God. Prayer and meditation accompany the true fast; and not without this thought, that a Lent without extra prayer tends to breaches of charity by reason of its strain. Especially, give time for devotion to the blessed Passion as the revelation of love.

The Fast of Lent

ASH-WEDNESDAY

"*Render your heart, and not your garments.*"—Joel ii. 13.

"*Where your treasure is.*"—S. Matt. vi. 21.

Consider: the common dislike of Lent.

Pray: for a right spirit throughout Lent.

I.—*The Jewish fasts.*

- (a) The prophets spoke severely of them; Isaiah's language (ch. lviii.) may be misapplied into a disapproval of all fasting, and Joel's into a condemnation of all external marks of penitence. But they have written in very similar strains of the sacrifices. "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," is parallel to "Render your heart, and not your garments."
- (b) The prophet's words are a warning needed in every age, Christian as well as Jewish, that all religious exercises must be infused with a right spirit, that mere observance does not satisfy him who searcheth the heart. And where attempts have been made to avoid the danger by the dismissal of ceremonial and observance, the same spirit has been exhibited in other directions.
- (c) But the prophets had a further purpose in the matter of fasting, which was not an ingredient of the early Hebrew religion, but an addition in the days of national depression and humiliation. While the prophets spiritualized custom and deepened the conscience, the people instituted fasts to move Jehovah; and the prophets did not see in their fasts the expression of a true repentance, but its substitute.

II.—*Christian Lent.*

- (a) One may be tempted to impatience at our prescribed fasts and times of repentance, as marks of formalism. But the Church acts in her corporate character, and bids us obey; and obedience is better than self-imposed penances. And the Christian must infuse the right spirit into his observance, behaving as a son and not as a slave: he must see to it that his observance do not degenerate into the spirit of formalism.
- (b) There are uneasy reflections, based on past experience, which will provide due matter for the preparation of Lent; the consciousness, perhaps, of a Lent which has meant the burden of extra services and devotions without any corresponding spiritual growth; or of self-denials in trivial matters of food and pleasure which have made one irritable.
- (c) There are ways in which it is quite fit that one should dislike Lent. It is a season in which one undertakes more, denies one's self something, and schools one's self to do what one does not like. If Lent means anything, it is necessarily the facing of something stern. But it should be inspired by a set purpose: "Where one's treasure is."

III.—*Lent's purpose.*

- (a) One great purpose of Lent is the increase of penitence. Never be satisfied with a Lent of undertakings and self-denials. Prayer must go with mortification, and especially the prayers of contrition together with examination. True penitence will do away with the irksomeness and strain of Lent.
- (b) Another great purpose of Lent is self-discipline. "I can do all things" is the Christian principle, but only so because the Christian cannot please himself, or forget that the new life has to grow in the soil of an old self which is ready to spring up into life. True penitence will show the need of self-discipline.
- (c) "Mortification" is a hateful word to the natural mind. Our Lord puts it in its right place when in connection with fasting he places the fixing of the heart's treasure in heaven. Let Lent be the time for this, and it will have its own refreshment and joy. The Church has put these considerations before us very clearly in appointing the season of our Lord's Temptation and Passion.

Fasting

THURSDAY AFTER ASH-WEDNESDAY

"When ye fast."—S. Matt. vi. 16.

Picture: the Pharisee and the publican in the temple.

Resolve: to maintain one's Lenten resolution.

I.—Fasting.

- (a) Asceticism is very far from being peculiar to Christianity; it is both older and more widely spread than it. Indeed, as a Christian practice it requires careful consideration, for in two directions it may become un-Christian. Thus there may lie beneath it a false conviction, or at least suspicion, that human enjoyment is wrong, that marriage is not holy, and that the body is one's enemy.
- (b) Or, there may be the view that self-conquest is the goal of life, the attainment of entire respectability and discipline of body and temper. Of practices on such a basis one may say, "Bodily exercise profiteth for a little." It may be physically very good to keep the Lenten rule of fasting; but Christians do not keep Lent as a medical recommendation.
- (c) A Christian's Lent must be based on one of two principles: either the heart has been taken captive by God, and he invites us into fellowship with him in Jesus Christ through the practice of Lent's discipline, wherein the irksomeness of it is lost in the experience of spiritual refreshment; or the heart is genuinely seeking conversion, and the exterior mortification is the attendant circumstance of an interior forsaking of sin through the grace of God. In most lives these are combined, but a Lenten fast which is not an earnest means of drawing nearer to God is not Christian.

II.—Fasting and the Bible.

- (a) Fasting began to take a fixed place in Jewish life when the depressing history of the nation was beginning to bring home to men's consciences a more personal sense of sin, and distance from Jehovah. And it was frequently used as a material compulsion whereby the Deity was to be appeased. This radically false view was attacked by the prophets with great boldness; and their language was often misunderstood by their contemporaries.
- (b) In the Gospels one has reached the stage which is so full of danger to us to-day; the observance of prescribed fasts was the expression of orthodoxy; they were obeyed with exterior assent, and were even ostentatiously displayed. But our Lord brought fasting into close relationship with prayer and almsgiving; and in all there was to be an interior consent.
- (c) After Pentecost, as might be expected, no injunction of fasting, as a necessary rule of Church life, is laid down. Its continued practice is referred to, but it is not yet organized. It is closely associated with special occasions of prayer, and S. Paul condemns asceticism based on unsound principles. Self-discipline is an aspect of Christian life.

III.—Fasting and the Church.

- (a) As the Church grew, and necessarily became organized, the practice of fasting was regulated both as to time and form. It has introduced into the Churchman's life the exercise of spiritual obedience, and by a very valuable association with Lent has allied it with penitence and the fellowship of Our Blessed Lord's Passion.
- (b) With the freedom of Church life which prevails in England, there is less temptation to fast in the spirit of ostentation, or with interior rebellion. But there remains the old snare, to substitute a material act of discipline for a spiritual.
- (c) We enter Lent with the temptation of the Son of Man; do this in genuineness of heart, that it may produce contrition, increase of prayer, and dependence upon the grace of God. Let devotional exercises go with fasting. Every Lent should bring us nearer to God.

Mortification

FRIDAY AFTER ASH-WEDNESDAY

"Mortify therefore."—Col. iii. 5.

Picture: a non-Christian oriental ascetic.

Resolve: a mortification of the will this Lent.

I.—*Mortification.*

- (a) A common element in most ancient and especially in oriental religions. Christians may pity the misguided energy, but are often put to shame by the exhibition of religious earnestness. It is commonly felt by non-Christians in India, for example, that Christianity is too comfortable a religion. Yet it has not been so presented to us by its Founder and his immediate followers.
- (b) Non-Christian mortification is frequently based upon false principles. There may be the idea that it is matter which holds back the spirit from its fuller development, or there may be the impression that self-denial and extreme asceticism will merit reward. Let us not despise, but examine our own principles of conduct.
- (c) When the teaching of the New Testament and the practice of the apostles are weighed against our own comfortableness, we should seek rather to understand the true principles of mortification, and the proper place which should be ascribed to it in Christianity. It is easy to despise certain aspects in the life, let us say, of S. Ignatius Loyola or of S. Francis Xavier, but we cannot deny their immeasurable superiority to ourselves.

II.—*Christian mortification.*

- (a) There is emphatically first the absolute demand to endure to the uttermost rather than to sin voluntarily. An easy standard of religion has softened this into an injunction not to sin if you can avoid sin without much cost. To resist unto blood, striving against sin, is foreign to the softness of our generation. Have I ever fought against sin with a deadly grapple?
- (b) Our members, which are upon the earth, are to be mortified. Here is a wide sphere of self-discipline, embracing the proper subjugation of legitimate passions, lest they should not be under entire control. Here we may consider not only the appetites, but such things as self-indulgence in sleep, the tongue, the time spent upon recreation, the use of money.
- (c) Closely related to these thoughts is the very common experience of some specially undisciplined member, which requires drastic treatment of a trenchant character. "And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee." One must face resolutely whether one cares more for the kingdom of heaven than for present ease.

III.—*Mortify therefore.*

- (a) Because dead and risen with Christ, because the heart is set above, because when he appears the Christian looks to appear with him in glory. This aspect of Christian mortification is fundamental. The Christian does not aim at self-attainment, but at the maintenance of union with Christ, whose presence is the assurance of all that the Christian seeks whether now or in the future.
- (b) And his presence demands conditions which he is powerful to fulfil if the will be given to him. He will brook no rival, and he requires a mortification which goes further than the recognized practices of the avowed ascetic. The pride of self lies deeper than all evils.
- (c) But the "therefore" contains the Christian attitude towards this problem and reveals a mortification which is the way of peace and joy by the setting free from the slavery of self for the fellowship of Christ. It speaks of a will strengthened by him, and of a present reward of his life growing within. The Christian does not live for the future; he realizes a present.

Corporate Responsibility

SATURDAY AFTER ASH-WEDNESDAY

"Give not thy heritage to reproach."—Joel ii. 17.

Picture: the Temple scene in Joel ii. 15-17.

Resolve: some act or practice which expresses corporate responsibility.

I.—*The season of Lent.*

- (a) Lent is often regarded as the time for thinking about one's own soul. But consider how impossible it is really to isolate one's self. Even in sin one cannot be alone; not even in those cases in which the conscience seems to accuse one of sin against God alone. And the season of Lent calls one to corporate fasting and contrition.
- (b) Such use of it is perhaps suggested by the Epistle for Ash-Wednesday, and by the corporate confession of the Communion Service, and still more by the public days of fasting and mourning which used to be commanded on special occasions. These, whatever may have been their disadvantages, did give cause for reflection upon national decay of character.
- (c) Such a public invitation to mourning was invited by Joel after the visitation of a plague of locusts, or of a northern army viewed under the symbolism of locusts. It was a national disaster, which seemed to portend the ushering in of the great day of the Lord. It was to be a genuine fasting of rending the heart and of turning to God; a solemn assembly with a public litany chanted by the priests, in which Jehovah was entreated not to make them a by-word among the heathen.

II.—*Lent and the Church.*

- (a) An increased sense of corporate Church responsibility is in the air; it is impossible yet to know whether it is to become a sense of shame and a stirring of amendment, or whether it is only an intellectual appreciation of ideals and devoid of any reforming power. But as yet the Church has not mourned; she is gaily pleased with herself for seeing so much, and is rather complacent as to her spiritual energy.
- (b) And Lent may be used for a solid penitence and a humble beginning of amendment in regard to the evangelization of the world. We boast of our superiority over the sects, and of our enlightened breadth of view over the Roman communion; yet on each side we are put to shame and hopelessly outnumbered in foreign work. And each of us has his share in this shame.
- (c) At home we are still full of divisions and separations; our Church life is not a recognized power of influence upon the parish. We prefer church buildings according to our taste, and services of a type which gratify us, to spiritual worship and to the winning of souls. We have not even learnt the power of corporate prayer.

III.—*Lent and the nation.*

- (a) Easy to contrast Church and nation, and to feel that the Church does not approve of this or that for which the nation is responsible. Is that satisfactory after the long centuries of Church life? Apply such reflections to marriage and education.
- (b) And there is such a thing as national life, in which we share. Does it call for no Lenten penitence? The opium treaty; the liquor traffic; social practices both moral and commercial. We are nationally ready to try political expedients if thereby we can reform the social condition of the majority of our English brethren; but there is not manifest any spirit of sacrifice or reparation, which suggests the conviction that if we had served God more faithfully he would not have let us be in this state to-day.
- (c) Here, too, we can see; but the national conscience is not roused. There is no determination to do; only a desire to see it done without ourselves suffering inconvenience. It is for the Church to win by her prayers and fastings the grace of a true national repentance manifested in amendment of public life.

The Revelation of the Cross

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

"Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."—Acts xiii. 38.

Picture: the Crucifixion.

Resolve: acts of hope and resolution.

I.—*The revelation of man.*

- (a) Consider the assumption of human nature by the Son of God. It is the great revelation of hope. The Eternal Mediator could not assume a nature which was hopelessly lost. The death of Jesus Christ is the revelation of man's ultimate attainment of the divine purpose for him.
- (b) Pre-eminently the Cross is the revelation of victory; and that victory was won in our human nature. And that it is not the victory of what might have been, but of what is to be, is involved in our belief that he did not die in vain. Fitly we call it *Good Friday*.
- (c) This further illustrates the revelation of forgiveness, for forgiveness is not the end of the Christian life, but its beginning. The Cross manifests forgiveness as the great expression of divine faith in the redemption of human nature, whereby it enters through fellowship in Jesus Christ upon the victorious life of man.

II.—*His human nature available for us.*

- (a) He died for us that we being reconciled to God by his death might live unto God in him. It is the life of grace which he has opened to us. The sacrament of Baptism is "into his death"; the sacrament of Holy Communion, instituted on the eve of his death, is the communication to his living members of his body broken and of his blood shed.
- (b) And just as I am assured that his death is not in vain, so am I sure that the Sacraments of his death—the forgiveness of sins and all other benefits of his Passion—are none other than the very conveyance of all the grace which he has obtained for us through his death. Belief in the Sacraments is the extension of belief in his atoning death.
- (c) The consideration of the victory of humanity in him, and the availability of his life for us thereby, explains the nature of the Church. It is the life of Christ for us in fellowship with his members. It is his Body, prepared for us through death. The Church is the victory of humanity, and the home of grace. And thus forgiveness is not only an act, but a state.

III.—*The revelation of the regenerate life.*

- (a) The humanity of Jesus Christ crucified is the manifestation of the life that is, and is to be increasingly, in us as the fruit of union with him. He has therein made known to us the understanding of the true life of man, even as in him he is even now commencing to transform us after his own likeness.
- (b) This is the life of fellowship. He did not live to himself or die to himself, but he counted his own life as of no account to himself that he might win us. Even as we do not sin alone, so neither do we live alone, but by being brought into the fellowship of Christ and his people. And the expression of this life in us is in the abandonment of self and the surrender of ourselves to him.
- (c) Thus the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ is not the type of the regenerated life; it is its source, as incorporated into him he imparts his life to us and renews us by his grace. Hold up the Cross of Jesus Christ as the interpretation of the meaning of life, and consider it not as the example but as the power to reproduce itself in human life.

The Attractiveness of Temptation

FIRST MONDAY IN LENT'

"I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation."—Apoc. iii. 10.

Picture: the scene of Adam and Eve's sin.

Resolve: distrust in self and trust in God.

I.—*Consider the picture.*

- (a) True to the case to be presented. Sin began in the childhood of the world; it is a simple story of a simple sin; a child's story. But read these verses in the light of some recent temptation yielded to, and see if the history be not true.
- (b) True to fact; making the temptation come from a little thing; big things as a rule do not tempt us. True in coming from an inferior creature. True also to experience; the growing power of it as it is heeded, being treated to an answer, when it should have been turned from.
- (c) True to spiritual realities. There is mistrust of God, and of his character. There is the wide range of temptation: "good to eat" (the lust of the flesh); "pleasant to the sight" (the lust of the eyes); "a tree to make one wise" (the pride of life). There is the usual history of temptation's success; the guilty hiding from God, the fear of his voice in the garden of the soul, excuses, the loss of some happy Eden, the sin passed on to others.

II.—*Beguiled through subtlety* (2 Cor. xi. 3).

- (a) If only temptation were seen to be such, carried with it a plain statement of its consequences, then where were the temptation? But consider how it slides in, seeming at first to brace the victim against itself. "Yea, hath God said?" "Yes; God hath said." There is determination to resist because God has uttered his No, with a lingering satisfaction upon one's power of determination, and some self-confidence. But while we flatter ourselves that the situation is ours, we have already begun to yield.
- (b) It approaches on the weakest side. In Eden there was little room for temptation, but there was a visible token of the lack of independence. Christians feel this in the restraint of religious custom and practice. Or men confident of their intellectual powers will penetrate into the holy of holies, not fearing to cast off the vesture in which truth has been clad by successive generations.
- (c) It beguiles through attractiveness. Good for food and pleasant to the eyes, it would seem as if only the exaggerated estimate of morbid minds can have suspected evil here. God meant us to be happy: surely he would not put a check upon innocent pleasure! And the attracted will begins to criticize God, and at the same time to forget its weakness.

III.—*The woman being deceived* (1 Tim. ii. 14).

- (a) Deceived through subtlety. Often one is deceived through the hidden character of the temptation and the dulness of one's spiritual perceptions. Happy therefore is the man who can let another tell him his faults. Every one must pray for the forgiveness of the sins of which he is ignorant.
- (b) Of one sin as conceived by the primitive mind we have a record, and of the history of its life. But other sins have history too, have their effects upon the sinner, pass on the results to others, darken the understanding, weaken the will, loosen the grasp upon the living God. As to all this temptation deceives: it presents itself as an isolated act.
- (c) In Lent it is good to meditate upon the dangers which surround temptation, lest we walk jauntily, in the confidence of good habits and resolutions and a strong will. Conscience needs much enlightenment, and to be made sensitive by humble dependence upon God, and by continual study of him who for our sakes fasted.

Temptation and Trial

FIRST TUESDAY IN LENT

"God did tempt Abraham."—Gen. xxii. 1.

"By faith Abraham when he was tried."—Heb. xi. 17.

Picture: the pilgrim Abraham called to sacrifice the child of promise.

Resolve: in the trials of life to see the good hand of God.

I.—*Temptation and trial.*

- (a) Not all temptation is to a definite sin. Many lives fail because they only regard the avoidance of specific sin. Strenuous effort and perseverance are not solely required to overcome bad habits and to resist temptation to this or that sin, but far more that we may advance in the way of God, and not be brought into conformity with the world by gradual relaxation.
- (b) Temptation and trial lie close together: two aspects of one experience. All trial provides the occasion of temptation; every temptation resisted by the grace of God is a trial bearing fruit in our lives. Consider some case in your own life in which the trial of discipline has passed into an active temptation because you have in some degree yielded to it.
- (c) Happily there is the converse. Temptation may by the grace of God pass into trial, which he does not speedily remove, because, while his grace enables you now to resist, he is building up your spiritual life through it. Do not bemoan the trial of watchful resistance against a weak spot, as though God dealt hardly with you.

II.—*Trial of the unknown future.*

- (a) This week consider the trial of life's experiences as seen in the history of Abraham. First, his pilgrimage journey, which began in a family migration (Gen. xi. 31) and continued in a divine call (Gen. xii. 1). Much lies hidden in this combination. How easy it is in the experiences which we call trials, to feel as if God had left us, rather than to see his call, assured that "I will bless thee" (Gen. xii. 2)!
- (b) Apart from the occasional crisis of separation there is to most the continual trial of the unknown future; livelihood is dependent upon health, work is uncertain, business may fail. Most too have looked anxiously into the future in the light of a very qualified success and partial failure in the past. How shall we face this future except in the power of "Get thee out into a land that I will show thee" (Gen. xii. 1)?
- (c) Abraham's power to face the future was in that "he looked for the city which hath the foundations" (Heb. xi. 10). Why has Our Lord told us what he is preparing for us, if we are not to be encouraged thereby in our trials? May trial wean us not from the visible to an unknown future, but to a very certain future of rest from anxiety and separation!

III.—*The sacrifices of life.*

- (a) The keen trial of Isaac's sacrifice came to faithful Abraham. Few parents but can share in some degree in the agony of the patriarch. Or one may be called to sacrifice the brightest prospect of life; health has failed, or duty has prevented the further pursuit of one's aim. Temptation says "Rebel": trial whispers "By faith."
- (b) The keenest part of Abraham's trial was that the sacrifice was to be self-inflicted. Some friendship is realized at last to clash with the friendship of God. Some ambition or career of promise is drawing me slowly from him; or I am inwardly impelled to surrender it for a hidden life of self-sacrifice, without scope or occasion for success.
- (c) Consider Abraham, who endured, "accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead" (Heb. xi. 19). Have faith in the character of God, accounting that the sacrifice which he demands is not the sacrifice of his good purposes, but the fulfilment of them, a more than raising from the dead of that which he bids us slay.

The Temptation of Responsibility

FIRST WEDNESDAY IN LENT

"Because ye believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel."
—Numb. xx. 12.

Picture: Moses viewing the land before his death.

Resolve: to consider gravely the trial of responsibility.

I.—*The burden: sin: punishment.*

- (a) An all but superhuman burden. Consider of what sort these Israelites were; like sheep, but not so submissive. For many years Moses endured them, and consider with what faithfulness. Then think of your own little trial of responsibility.
- (b) Once only did the wearied Moses fall from his height. They provoked his spirit and he spake unadvisedly with his lips. A startling reminder of the trial of life's duty, and a warning to all in authority. Responsibility is that for which one has to give an answer.
- (c) The punishment seems unduly heavy. But mark that it was solely temporal. Consider that he entered into his rest in fuller measure than they; that in mercy his burden was the sooner removed; that he was spared the disillusionment of the conquest; that in later days he stood in the land on the Mount of Transfiguration by the side of that greater prophet (Deut. xviii. 48). God's punishments need no repentance.

II.—*The fault.*

- (a) Not the sudden collapse of a life; for he was not withdrawn from his high office; he died in great honour; throughout Scripture he stands as the faithful servant. Much that was good mingled with the sin; there was righteous indignation, but not properly controlled; weariness with the perpetual murmuring was mixed with some forgetfulness that the people's sin was rather against God than against his servant.
- (b) A sin is a complicated thing; circumstances only decide its form, but the true diary of the soul can alone reveal its generation. A certain state of life permits the development of evil, and invites temptation along the line of most favourable circumstances. To some it has seemed that by striking the rock twice he would as it were force the waters by his own power. Such an impression may have been given; we often do more in hasty moments than we realize.
- (c) The sin is described as not sanctifying God. He publicly exhibited impatience in the execution of a divine mandate, presuming in this way to obtrude himself. And he disrespected God's word by modifying it. The rod was not now to be used, as thirty-eight years before, to manifest the divine commission to the leader; but God's majesty alone was to be seen. Moses reduced this to a mere repetition, and even miracles get stale if they are repeated.

III.—*Some deeper lessons.*

- (a) The murmuring Israelites entered Canaan: Moses was forbidden. To whom much is given of him will much be required. And too it is to be remembered that a long life of faithfulness means a spiritual liberality of grace, and that a position of trust has the promise of strength to endure.
- (b) The whole spiritual force of that which is associated with Moses depended for its validity solely—beyond a certain teaching power of symbol—on the fact that it was divinely appointed. Yet this instrument of God dared to change a definite command into a general instruction. There are those who presume to be wiser than God, while seeing only the immediate relation, and that partially.
- (c) The rock struck at Rephidim was now to be spoken to. By the one offering the perpetuity of it in sacramental use is secured by the word spoken, not the human word of power, but the divinely given word of Christ, at the sound of which the one striking avails to bring forth the life-giving waters. When we disobey God we do not know the import of what we do.

(For EMBER MEDITATIONS, see pp. 485-496.)

The Temptation to Drifting

FIRST THURSDAY IN LENT

"We let her drive."—Acts xxvii. 15.

Picture: the life of Saul as a ship being driven on the sea of life by the force of circumstances.

Resolve: the daily dedication of life's purpose.

I.—*Saul's equipment for life's voyage.*

- (a) Natural gifts sufficient for any task which might be laid upon him. Raised to be the first king, in a grave national crisis, he was able to command monarchy to Israel, and broadly to deliver the country from the Philistines. Humanly considered, his life, until near the end, was a success.
- (b) His moral equipment also looked well. He showed modesty, his head was not turned by the change of his fortunes, nor by his first successes, and he commenced well. But the greatest trials of life are those of middle age, when youth's ideals have worn thin, and prosperity has led to self-satisfaction.
- (c) Only later was perceived the lack of directing purpose, and that the fair-looking vessel was not under strong control. His life drifted, until circumstances made sport of it. There was a gradual deadening of the spiritual faculties; he practised religion, but his religion did not rule his life. Possibly adversity might have deepened him.

II.—*The external crisis.*

- (a) Two crises of evil are recorded. All lives have crises, more or less clearly defined, in which may be seen the result already attained of progress or decay. The crisis, which is a result, is also a cause from which the future proceeds. In Saul's history neither crisis is associated with a violent temptation, but each registers the formalism and superficiality of his religion.
- (b) Outward prosperity formed a temptation not realized, and he had the further temptations of flattery, independence and evil advisers; yet also, like us, he had good influences about him, had he sought them: Samuel, David and Jonathan, at different stages of his life, and above all the Spirit of God which had begun to move him, and which he despised.
- (c) The first crisis (1 Sam. xiii. 8 ff.) manifested the deep-seated evil of regarding life and first's task as secular. It is a fatal thing to separate religion from the daily life; Saul had done this in going to battle without a divine oracle. His superficial view of religion as a matter of ceremonial conformity was shown in his observance of sacrifice when he was acting independently of the Divine will. In his second crisis (1 Sam. xv.) he had dismissed God's honour in his own glorification.

III.—*The interior ruin.*

- (a) The life devoid of personal religion deceives itself by external observances. When rebuked by Samuel, all that Saul could desire was, "Yet honour me now . . . before Israel" (1 Sam. xv. 30, 31). Such conduct befits the man who, after sinning in the sparing of the best of Amalek's spoil, thought first of setting up a monument (ver. 12, R.V.), and then dared to excuse his disobedience by the plea that the people had taken the spoil to sacrifice unto God (ver. 21).
- (b) Such hollowness of religion is accompanied by strict obedience at the expense of others, and by superstition. Saul would have killed Jonathan for the sake of his rash oath (xiv. 43 ff.); he destroyed the Gibeonites whom Joshua had spared (2 Sam. xxi. 1); he put away the wizards, but consulted them in his straits (1 Sam. xxviii. 3 ff.). He feared not to disobey God, yet feared his power in the person of David: feeling bereft of God, he turned to occult powers.
- (c) A well-equipped life was shipwrecked through fatal neglect of the great law of religion, that "to obey is better than sacrifice." Observance, occasional righteous acts, are the snares which blind, when they are not the expression of a life lived in loyalty to God.

Temptation Overcome

FIRST FRIDAY IN LENT

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."—Ps. xxxii. 1; Rom. iv. 6-8.

Picture: the penitence of David.

Pray: for such reality that true repentance may be possible.

I.—*Life's external trial.*

- (a) Once more consider the trial of a whole life. Here not altogether in prosperity. A shepherd-boy, a youthful hero, a court servant, a public favourite, a king's son-in-law, a fugitive, a persecuted outlaw, a freebooter, a king, a king in flight, an old age.
- (b) But further, each stage of his life had its temptations; a shepherd-boy might have aimed at nothing higher than the avoidance of censure; with David it laid the foundation of his meditation on God, and he quietly strengthened himself by bravery for the execution of unforeseen responsibilities. Consider how other stages of his experience helped to fit him for his future history.
- (c) At court he behaved prudently and was a man of honour; his intimacy with Jonathan reflects nearly as much credit upon himself as upon his friend. An outlaw and freebooter, he waited God's time and refused to act in his place, and in this great trial of adversity his character was not ruined by the temptations of his wild conditions.

II.—*Life's deeper trial.*

- (a) As though Saul's life was not sufficient warning of the temptations of prosperity, consider that David's sins belong to the period of his successful conditions. Misfortune's adverse circumstances are often not so severe a trial to the soul as prosperity, ease, and contentment, which tempt to relaxation of watchfulness.
- (b) His sin against Uriah and Bathsheba was the direct outcome of indulgence, occurring when he should have been at the wars (2 Sam. xi. 1). It is not he whose occupations are so many that time for quiet preparation of the heart seems impossible, who is in the greatest danger; but he whom leisure and easy circumstances tempt.
- (c) This one sin darkened the remainder of his life. Domestic peace was ruined. Not even a godly man can sin with impunity; and yet often the severest trial of life is the fruit of sin, under the strain of which, in superficial repentance, one grows to rebel against God's dealing. Not believing sincerely in his wisdom and goodness, one expects an easy forgiveness without taste of the bitter fruits of punishment.

III.—*A man after God's own heart.*

- (a) Saul after the people's heart, David after God's heart; yet both sinned deeply. "On the whole we make too much of faults . . . The greatest of faults, I should say, is to become conscious of none . . . Of all acts, is not, for a man, repentance the most divine? . . . David's life and history . . . I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of a man's moral progress and warfare here below."—Carlyle.
- (b) So consider how in the varied experiences of poverty and wealth, youth and age, spoiled favourite and hated rival, outcast life and palace life, David learned the spiritual life which can rise to a true and deep repentance. There is no fear that the secret of his life is adapted only to special circumstances. It is difficult to be able to repent; but David learned through all his life the reality of God, that he is living, personal, holy, loving, and faithful.
- (c) What Saul missed David grasped, that religion is not external, but is the interior communion between God and man expressing itself in obedience to the divine direction, wherein is found fellowship. God was his God, and when he sinned against him his heart was rent; but he had learned God, and this personal understanding gave him a strong grasp upon the blessedness of forgiveness.

(For EMBER-TIDE MEDITATION, see reference given on p. 121.)

The Temptation of Opposition

FIRST SATURDAY IN LENT

"Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife!"—Jer. xv. 10.

Picture: consider Jeremiah sharing "the reproach of Christ."

Pray: for grace wherewith to meet opposition.

I.—*The trial of opposition.*

- (a) Few of life's trials are more hard to bear than misunderstanding. This is the inevitable lot of one who lives among companions whose standard differs from his. Jeremiah experienced it in his conviction that the Chaldeans were God's servants to bring the people into punishment, and in his advice that the Jews should submit to their fate.
- (b) As a spiritual leader he experienced it in the burden of preaching the message of Jehovah to a people whose eyes were blinded that they should not see. They did not believe that their local worship was full of unbelief and superstition, that their social life was in direct contradiction to the law of God. Jeremiah had a sense of personal responsibility which to the people had the savour of morbid exaggeration.
- (c) There are some who love to be in opposition, in whom it rouses the natural instincts of fighting. But Jeremiah shrank from strife; he was timid, and a man of peace. "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife!" "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men!" A timid man, he shrank from publicity: "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child." Consider that God often chooses the apparently unlikely instrument.

II.—*Jeremiah a type of Christ.*

- (a) The typical relationship of Jeremiah's sufferings to the history of Jesus Christ has always been a familiar theme. It has led to the ascribing of various psalms to his authorship, which most fully present in prophecy the Divine Passion (e.g. xxxi., xxxv., lxix.). Apply this thought to I (a), (b), in the doom pronounced by Christ upon Jerusalem, and in his teaching which brought upon him the charge of being a Samaritan and a blasphemer.
- (b) Jeremiah's life was one long-drawn agony of suffering and persecution. His own family turned against him (Jer. xii. 6; xx. 10). His neighbours in Anathoth persecuted him (Jer. xi. 19). The chief priest put him in the stocks (xx. 2), and later on he narrowly escaped death on two occasions (xxvi. 8; xxxviii. 4) and was cast into a miry dungeon (xxxviii. 6).
- (c) He who was consumed with burning zeal for his nation was denounced as a traitor. He was accused of desiring to fall away to the Chaldeans (xxxvii. 11 ff.), and of weakening the hands of the people (xxxviii. 4); at the last, after he had declared Jerusalem to be safe and Egypt to be destruction, he was taken thither (xlii., xliii. 1-7), and according to tradition was stoned there.

III.—*The endurance of misunderstanding.*

- (a) It makes one blush to think of Jeremiah's life after one has been dwelling on one's petty trials; by being misjudged by the worldly minded and regarded as puritanic; or through misunderstanding when one cannot see eye to eye with another equally conscientious with one's self. Yet even these often prove temptations under which the tempted breaks down, or the conscience suffers because weakness overcomes.
- (b) Far more difficult are the misunderstandings which break personal friendships or ruin home life. Or when a parish priest has in teaching or in practice to oppose himself to his people: who shall be sufficient for these things unless he learn to endure with Christ "the reproach of Christ"?
- (c) Jeremiah is pre-eminently the suffering prophet; but we are shocked at his terrible invective. How painfully after words which remind us of Our Lord (Jer. xi. 19) comes the prayer, "Let me see thy vengeance on them." (Cf. xv. 15; xvii. 18; xviii. 20 ff.) In this week we turn in contrast to him who endured the contradiction of sinners, and remember that it is his spirit that animates us.

(For EMBER-TIDE MEDITATION, see reference given on p. 121.)

Pleasing God

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

"*And to please God.*"—1 Thess. iv. 1.

Consider : Jesus Christ our example : "I do always those things that please him" (S. John viii. 29).

Examine the central motive of your life.

I.—*The Thessalonian Church.*

- (a) S. Paul taught a practical Christianity as the exhibition of Christian principle and power. Men were to behave well to all (iv. 12; v. 14, 15), and to work (iv. 11); their moral conduct must be above reproach (iv. 3, 7). The Thessalonians were in some danger of thinking more about the coming of Christ than of being ready for it (iv. 13–v. 12; esp. v. 1, and cp. Acts xvii. 7).
- (b) There was a motive in the conduct which S. Paul taught, and the motive was Christian. Right conduct in all its relationships pleases God (Heb. xiii. 16). This was perceived under the old covenant (Mic. vi. 6–8), as also that devotional worship demands a right motive for its acceptability (Ps. lxi. 30, 31). So Enoch, who walked with God, pleased him (Gen. v. 24; Heb. xi. 5).
- (c) In this Epistle S. Paul wrote of the Jews that "they please not God" (ii. 15). How absurd it would seem to a Jew that this should be said of his favoured nation, while of the Macedonian Gentiles it could be written that they so walk as to please him! Let Christians examine the motive-springs of their lives, lest the publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of heaven before them.

II.—*Jesus Christ.*

- (a) "Even Christ pleased not himself" (Rom. xv. 3) is not very clear, nor is the usual comment, "How much less we!" very helpful. But the R.V., "For Christ also pleased not himself" presents the fundamental lesson that he is to be studied that we may follow in his steps. It should be habitual with Christians to seek for the ideals of their life in him.
- (b) But the manner of S. Paul's reference to Jesus Christ here is very suggestive. In the words of the Psalmist (Ps. lxi. 9) he makes him confess that he so walked that the reproaches intended for God fell on himself. He so fully presented the mind of God that what they objected to in him became an exposition of their rebellion against God. That indeed was so walking as to please God.
- (c) And the application is no less suggestive; in like manner is every disciple of Jesus Christ to please his neighbour for good to edification, namely, after the example of Christ and so as to please God. There is a way of pleasing men which is not pleasing to God (Gal. i. 10; Eph. vi. 6) because the motive is not Christian. And he who seeks to please men so as to please God must be prepared to learn something of the meaning of the Psalmist.

III.—*Pleasing God.*

- (a) The Christian man is neither identical with the moral man nor with the benevolent, but he is one who in the power of God seeks to please him after the manner of Jesus Christ in holy conduct and love of his neighbour. The Christian receives the grace of the spirit of sonship which draws the mind to please God. Failure to manifest this spirit is of the nature of rejecting God who daily renews us with his Holy Spirit (1 Thess. iv. 8, R.V.).
- (b) There is a tendency in all towards a false dualism, dividing life into the devotional and the active. It is commonly recognized by Christians that the life of prayer must have the true motive of pleasing God, or it will be form without spirit; but daily life is often satisfied with the standard of avoiding what is sinful. To do all the common duties of life so as to please God is regarded by many as an extravagant ideal.
- (c) But he who thus studies to please God in all things will learn much, and not least in his devotional life; he will progress in the divine fellowship by entering into the mind of God. It will be true of him in measure that "the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him" (S. John viii. 29).

The Deepening of Penitence

SECOND MONDAY IN LENT

"Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord."—Ps. cxxx. 1.

Picture: S. Paul, in old age, writing, "Sinners, of whom I am chief."

Pray: for progress in penitence.

I.—*Out of the deep.*

- (a) We picture Jeremiah in the dungeon, sunk in the mire, as type of those who in the extremity of despair have used this psalm. In the utmost distress one stands isolated; in loneliness of spirit one finds no companion, no one to help, even God seems powerless to relieve; the deep waters have gone over the soul. Such has often been the experience in the first blow of bereavement.
- (b) More universal is the application to the perceived depth of one's sins. God deals individually with us, and therefore no two experiences are alike; but many have felt the cry literally to be their own, when stricken down by an overwhelming transgression, or by the conviction of sin before the realization of forgiveness.
- (c) Such consideration provides a Lenten call to know the state of one's heart more accurately, and before God to cast away the last shred of complacency. "Just as I am, without one plea;" I make no claim upon God but his mercy, who came to call not righteous but sinners to repentance. Genuineness and depth of repentance.

II.—*Have I called.*

- (a) The silence of the locked heart is the most awful of all depths. To be reserved with God is to be on the verge of apostasy. It is the state of the elder son in the parable of the Prodigal son. Far better the prodigal, who was brought to throw himself on his father than the son in the house who never knew how to treat him as father.
- (b) Yet how slow and cold we are to call, how stiff in our approach to God! We address our prayers to a distant shrine, instead of opening the heart wide and laying it bare before One who is not even standing just beside us, but is actually within, waiting for our invitation to inspect what he has already seen infinitely more fully than we see.
- (c) The Psalmist strikes the keynote of the psalm in these words. He *has* called: the psalm is a Lenten study for progressing Christians, and so it mounts up to its climax: "O Israel, trust in the Lord"; "he shall redeem Israel from all his sins." The immediate fruit of deepening penitence is greater confidence with God.

III.—*Unto thee, O Lord.*

- (a) Where else should I call? Not even penances and mortifications will avail without this. Regret and resolution fail without it. There is personality and directness in the words, "If I go down to hell (hades) *thou art* there also"; so he cannot be far off from us. Not even recitation of acts of contrition will help unless there be the realization of direct speech from person to Person.
- (b) Unto thee, against whom I have sinned. It is easy to confess sins to a third person; it is only talking about one's self. The true test is to go and ask pardon of the one you have wronged and offended. To confess the depths of one's sins to God requires a grasp upon his claims to our life and service by creation and redemption. Deepen penitence by reflection upon these thoughts.
- (c) Unto thee to whom belong mercy and forgiveness. To the claim of God we must add the perception of his manifested character; then may we dare to call boldly upon him out of the deep. Hence Lent is the Christian time for increasing penitence by reflection upon the Passion, and for making it more direct and personal.

The Reality of Penitence

SECOND TUESDAY IN LENT

"O let thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint."—Ps. cxxx. 2.

Picture: the devout Psalmist, with his limited revelation wherewith to interpret life, throwing himself upon God.

Pray: for reality in penitence.

I.—*O let thine ears consider well.*

- (a) He will deal closely with God; out of the deep has he called with the ring of personality; now he thrusts his attention upon God. It is not a weak cry of despair; it is the strong cry of persevering bravery. He found reality when he cried out of the deep; he clings to this reality and will have nothing else.
- (b) There is a danger of living on a past reality which is become only the sentiment of an experience. Once one was genuine, penitent and full of high purpose, now one is living on the tradition of one's past: the life is not deepening, it is just keeping up to its exterior standard while within it is dying of starvation.
- (c) Penitence marks a man's state, not a past crisis. The penitent is such daily; before God in prayer he is still the penitent. He learns to love the relationship which has established for him the experience of the goodness of God. He is not crushed by remaining a penitent, for he has found the truth of the whole psalm—"there is mercy with thee"; "with him is plenteous redemption."

II.—*Consider well.*

- (a) The cry of reality; it seeks truth, not pleasantness. Is it sin or perplexity which disturbs him? he will hide nothing of it from God, let be what be. Is he dissatisfied with God? Reverently he will tell him so. He considers whether the conventional language of devotion has meaning for him; he will not use phrases glibly, but will weigh their force, and so probe his superficiality. And he calls upon God to deal truly with him.
- (b) In the depth of despair we understand the words, but with the Psalmist they are the relationship of daily life. The first glimpses of God, which brought peace to him in his penitence, have taught him the rich reward of dealing truly with him: he has seen enough to make him desire a close intimacy with him. Having opened his heart to God, he will keep it open to him.
- (c) The words imply reality of motive and simplicity of life. "Consider well, and reveal to me my insincerity and baser motives, my prejudices. I seek for high things; consider well, O God, whether they be good for me, or if I ask in ignorance or self-assurance. Withhold them from me, if it seemeth good to thee." Now am I thus real with God, or do I seek comfort and encouraging progress without too close investigation of hidden corners?

III.—*The voice of my complaint.*

- (a) Let God have the honest complaint: feebleness; or my human nature has broken down; or the will or a life fitfully Christian, or lived too far off from him to be lifted above the perplexities of existence, or too much in its own strength. Let him have the honest complaint of the wickedness of the world and how he tolerates it, or the difficulty of approaching him or whatever it may be.
- (b) But what is it? - For the Psalmist goes on to deal with the character of God and not with his own sins or with the problems of Israel. Reality and progress in penitence reveal to us the depths of God's character: consider how much more valuable is this revelation of God than any self-revelation which comes of penitence. The Christian life is the unveiling of God.
- (c) Next, the Psalmist does not suggest that the complaint was a grievance, and yet confession of sin is not prominent but rather that fruit of true penitence—the sense of man's inability to stand before God. Life is not just made up of confessions of sins; the grace of God is too bountiful for that; and the Psalmist has progressed beyond what men reckon sins into such knowledge of God as makes him realize that he has failed in trust after having tasted the goodness of the Lord.

The Sure Hope of Penitence

SECOND WEDNESDAY IN LENT

"If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss: O Lord, who may abide it?"—Ps. cxxx. 3.

Picture: from the words "Then shall they cry to the rocks, Fall on us."

Pray: for grace to measure aright his judgment and his mercy.

I.—*Extreme to mark.*

- (a) In all ages it would seem as if the devout mind has felt that "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." The Hebrew mind did not seem generally to get beyond the thought of a merciful leniency; it behoved him in his greatness not to crush us who are but dust in his sight, and have justly incurred his wrath. It led to the thought of mercy as a divine attribute.
- (b) S. Paul, referring to these earlier ages, spoke of the divine pretermission (Rom. iii. 25). God could not just be lenient; but only the revelation of the gospel had offered an explanation of the divine "overlooking" (Acts xvii. 30). The exercise of the divine mercy is now seen to be a manifestation of his wisdom.
- (c) The Christian also uses the words as full of meaning for himself. They express for him the truth that even now, as regenerate, he cannot endure the sight of God's penetrating investigation except he be hidden in Christ his Righteousness: there is still a divine "passing over" in view of the final fruit of grace.

II.—*Who may abide?*

- (a) There is a sense of the failure of human life. This, which S. Paul teaches is the purpose of the Jewish law, still adheres to the Christian revelation except when we contemplate the saints. Even when the work of grace is completed it will remain that only through Jesus Christ, whose perfect work will then be revealed in his people, can one endure the extremity of God's gaze.
- (b) There is a sense of the isolation of God in his sanctity. The Psalmist did not know of the fellowship of the Holy Trinity, or of the provision which lay therein for the ladder to connect heaven and earth. Yet the members of the old covenant never ceased to communicate with God through the divine provisions of sacrifice and prayer. Even then God was dealing with mankind under conditions which only the Christian revelation has made clear to us, as we too are living under conditions of grace which only the future will make clear to us.
- (c) The writer to the "Hebrews" felt the contrast between the two dispensations, and the greater responsibility of the latter (x. 26 ff.; xii. 25 ff.). The Christian danger is to presume upon the fuller revelation, and to despise the long-suffering and generosity. It is the office of persevering penitence to enhance the sense of divine mercy engendering presumption.

III.—*!f.*

- (a) The word suggests the judgment, the "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" the conviction that God's extremity to mark is not withdrawn from him absolutely, but asserts itself with final force where men turn from him that speaketh from heaven (Ileb. xii. 25). "They shall say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, Fall on us" (Hos. x. 8), has been carried over to the new covenant (S. Luke xxiii. 30).
- (b) Experience realizes it; the growing knowledge of God brings home the truth to us as we grow up into him in all things. We learn to know from what we are delivered the farther we escape from it. And experience embraces it as one learns to appreciate the holiness of God, and by his grace to realize that the only solid foundation of mercy is justice and truth.
- (c) The words are no idle speculation; it is not merely "all sinned," or "that there is no other Name under heaven whereby we may be saved," but also "I am doing so badly even with the abiding gift of Jesus Christ to sustain me." Leave the words with a new resolve to hide one's self in the Rock of Ages.

The Stimulus of Penitence

SECOND THURSDAY IN LENT

"For there is mercy with thee, therefore shalt thou be feared."—Ps. cxxx. 4.
("There is forgiveness," R.V.)

Picture: S. Mary Magdalene.

Pray: that the sense of forgiveness may abide as a strong stimulus to amendment of life.

I.—*Fearful.*

- (a) Much acquaintance with God lies behind the psalm: he feels the responsibility of forgiveness and mercy, and that it will be abused if one think selfishly of one's escape, and not rather of him who shows the mercy. Seek that God be in the very centre of one's heart, and not an occasional resort when the conscience is not at rest.
- (b) To fear God is the ambition of the penitent. Of the wicked it is said that there is no fear of God before his eyes, for they have no knowledge of him. This is moral folly; and in such way the books of the O.T., which are like the book of Proverbs, speak of the wicked as "fools." They do not regard God.
- (c) With the psalmist the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. It is another fruit of his having cried out of the depth to him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He sees something of the end to which that mercy is directed, and its righteousness. There is indeed a fear very different from this and which has no hope of mercy in it; it is this which the evil spirits feel, and hate him. The penitent's fear is the foundation of love. Indeed, we can love nothing which is good without fear.

II.—*There is mercy with thee.*

- (a) Out of the deep he has seen that which has drawn him towards God: it is the mystery of God's grace that has led him not to fly from his presence, but to see mercy in that perfect righteousness. We Christians have it revealed to us in the manifestation of him who knew no sin, yet who consorted with publicans and sinners.
- (b) The penitent is striving in his life to be saved from tampering with mercy. It is the fear of God which is his safeguard, and he seeks God himself, and to know more of him, that he may the more fear to offend or grieve him. He who regards forgiveness cheaply, will come for it glibly or without shame. S. Peter was not such an one, who wrote "If the righteous scarcely be saved." Our Lord's Passion is the great object of contemplation to those who would estimate the mercy of God.
- (c) The psalmist seems to boast of this quality of the divine mercy, as S. Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel, because he appreciates it as the power and the wisdom of God. Consider the responsibility to present to others this infinite mercy of God without degrading it. It must be done through deepening one's own perception of the holiness of God and of one's own utter dependence upon his mercy.

III.—*Therefore.*

- (a) It is the mercy which is to lead to the fear of God. The opposite is often true; no mercy, no fear. The refusal to forgive has often led to recklessness. In an elementary way consider that mercy acts as a stimulus through motives of gratitude and through the springing up of hope.
- (b) But with God mercy goes much further: it is exercised through grace. The forgiveness of sins is vouchsafed through restoration to spiritual life; the continued mercy to the penitent is an habitual supply of divine gifts. The psalmist has received much grace from God in the past, and it is its work which has produced in him this devout fear.
- (c) The mercy of God need not be confined to the life of the faithful penitent. It has also an attractive force. The knowledge of God's mercy draws sinners to him. It may be one motive for deepening life under the instruction of this psalm, that a fuller manifestation of his mercy in my life may draw other sinners to seek for the same mercy from him.

The Rest of Penitence

SECOND FRIDAY IN LENT

"I look for the Lord; my soul doth wait for him; in his word is my trust. My soul fleeth unto the Lord; before the morning watch, I say, before the morning watch."—Ps. cxxx. 5, 6.

Picture: from Ps. lv. 6.

Pray: for closer fellowship with God.

I.—*I look for the Lord.*

- (a) In the life of the penitent the fear of God becomes an increasing desire for him. Consider what rich soil is penitence, in which the fear of God, waiting for him, trust in him, fleeing unto him spring up. We may easily find reasons why penitence should be so productive.
- (b) One early mark of penitence was that it drew out the heart towards God: it is a sign of its difference from regret or shame, which turn in upon the heart and wear it away. But there are many stages in this looking for the Lord before the penitent looks for him as the eyes of a maiden look unto the hands of her mistress for the least sign.
- (c) But the psalmist has a long history of penitence and experience of God, whom he has learned to trust. With him it is night if God's presence be withdrawn. He strains his eyes to see his will, his approval, his direction, like a watchman on his tower counting the weary hours of night and whose trained eye catches the first anticipations of dawn (see R.V. ver. 6).

II.—*In his word is my trust.*

- (a) The experience of forgiveness is far more than it promised. There has sprung up from it peace, light-heartedness, companionship and much else. This gives great confidence in God; he is more than his word, even "plenteous redemption." Trust in him has been the means of learning distrust in self, and is the measure of it. It is dreadful to learn by experience to distrust self if one has not another to trust.
- (b) The psalmist's trust is not content to stop at an elementary stage; it leads on to flights of experience. His trust is the conviction of God's wisdom and mercy in dealing with him, and which draws out his soul to flee unto him in ways of which less experience in penitence knows nothing.
- (c) The penitent has great need of this trust. It is easy to be light-hearted when one never thinks of one's life; the penitent has to know himself, and by an energy of trust to see God over and above all and through all. Many strive to be penitent and are only gloomy and introspective and scrupulous: the truest penitent is not self-concentrated, but joyously free, and forgetful of self because of abounding trust in God who absorbs him.

III.—*My soul doth wait for him—fleeth unto the Lord.*

- (a) Waiteth—fleeth. The words may be regarded as applying to different circumstances. We flee to him from temptation, self-accusation, scruple or any snare. We wait for him, lest we presume to anticipate his will, and so force him to give us our desires to our own damage. They represent two activities of the spirit of penitence in the fear of God.
- (b) How much is lost by not waiting for him! Often because of this we do not know what his word is: we decide for ourselves, act for ourselves, only afterwards to find out that we acted unfaithfully. We lose God's blessings by the impatience which penitence should have helped to root out. The soul is not yet as a weaned child.
- (c) Like the dove flying from some disturbance, the penitent soul flees away to God to be at rest from himself. He aspires Godwards. So far from the penitent being one who is without ambition to rise, he learns the highest flight of aspiration from the sight of God which is vouchsafed to his humility, and it is only inexperience which impedes his flight.

The Spiritual Progress of Penitence

SECOND SATURDAY IN LENT

"O Israel, trust [hope, R.V.] in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy; and with him is plenteous redemption."—Ps. cxxx. 7.

Picture: Jesus Christ crucified before the eyes of the whole world.

Pray: for a strong hope based on a broad perception of his sacrifice.

I.—*Penitence and the Passion.*

- (a) Consider once more the history of penitence, how that it is a spiritual exercise leading to the deepening of the experimental knowledge of God. In this way it will be found to unfold the mystery of the Passion in new ways year by year. The Cross is not only forgiveness, but also the other fruits of penitence on which we have meditated, and those of this verse also.
- (b) To-day the psalmist leads us beyond the inspiring personal fruits of vers. 5, 6 to the consideration of those which pass beyond self and stretch out to all the chosen people of God—his Israel. In personal realization the true history of divine grace is often thus perceived in this reverse order, as the gradual training of the heart enables one to enter more fully into the mind of God.
- (c) At this season one ought not to be selfish; Lent carries one out of one's self and speaks of a wider scope: it is God's voice pealing forth to the world. As the Crucifixion is only accidentally the work of one generation and of one nation, but is really a world-drama, so too its fruit is as universal as is his human nature, and as wide as the state of sin which produced it.

II.—*O Israel, trust in the Lord.*

- (a) The psalmist has felt himself one of the chosen people of God; from individualism he has passed to Churchmanship. What is for him is for him just because he belongs to the covenanted people of God. What he has experienced they too may all know through his mercy; what he has learned he wills that they all may know, that God may be glorified in them also.
- (b) Deeper knowledge of God has widened his outlook. It is surely one motive for increasing penitence that it interprets to us the mind of God. His hope in God's word has led him to trust in God for the history of his people, not in schemes of salvation, but in God himself known, proved, and trusted, not for any narrow interpretation but for all life, all purposes of God.
- (c) Mercy. Hitherto the word "mercy" (ver. 4) was really forgiveness, pardon, remission (see R.V.). Now it is goodness, compassion. The particular mercy of forgiveness has educated him to apprehend it as one application of the property of God; he has by now found the mercy in many applications, and his confidence in him is unbounded.

III.—*For with him is plenteous redemption.*

- (a) Experience of penitence has also led to a wide interpretation of redemption; it is plenteous, free, bounteous, not exhausted at the first exercise. And from out of self the penitent has advanced to see therein the Redeemer of Israel; the Church is seen as the sphere of redemption, and the Church as the redeemed from among mankind. Life in the Church is the continued experience of redemption. We were not redeemed by one, nor can we live singly; life is collective.
- (b) To plenteous redemption one has learned to ascribe the widest extension and the fullest meaning. God's spiritual Israel has been brought into the full light of life, and all that is hers is so by the power of redemption: nothing is now common or unclean to her; the Passion extends to the cleansing of all things, and all that is embraced in life is within her sphere.
- (c) The psalmist through the Lenten discipline of penitence has led us to lose the thought of self in the all-inclusive purposes of God, in the universal Redeemer. We must look out upon life as illuminated by that cross, and in its light see life. "God so loved the world." In him is no cramping limitation either of the object or the power of redemption.

Sleepers, Awake!

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

"Awake, thou that sleepest."—Eph. v. 14.

Picture: the summer sun awaking the sleeper to the glory of day.

Pray: that every act to-day may be Christian.

I.—*The source of the words.*

- (a) The words are a quotation: the source has been sought in Isa. lx. 1, but this is remote. Are the words perhaps from a Jewish Messianic hymn applied or adapted by Christians? The Jewish nation felt by some devout writer to be in a torpor just when he thought he saw the signs of the Messiah's speedy approach.
- (b) Or do they express the exultation of the earliest Christian experience, when the true Messiah was known to have illuminated the heart and to have brought the life of the believer into the full joy of day under the brightness of the opened heavens?
- (c) Or is the origin of the hymn due to the same circumstances which led to S. Paul's use of it in quotation? Already the Christians were growing slothful; the first flush of Christianity in Asia Minor was giving place to the drowsiness of complacent acceptance without depth of appreciation. There is very much of this spirit in Christianity to-day, and there is need of a new realization of the joys of the Gospel to rouse the Church to the exultation of the Messianic age.

II.—*The words.*

- (a) The symbolism of the new day of activity, brightness and hope after the darkness of the night. Everything suggests power and health as against unconsciousness and inactivity. The symbolism may be drawn out into various illustrations. In common health the sun will suffice to arouse the sleeper, if it be allowed access to him; but the habitual sluggard, or the man who is drugged, can sleep with the bright summer sun pouring down upon him.
- (b) The application is direct and easy; we are constantly appalled by the indifference of men towards Christ, not so much by those who must sleep in the day because their lives belong to the night, as by those who present to our minds no sufficient reason for their sheer indifference. It was as though a man could not feel the sun, or was ignorant of its manifest blessings. Give due consideration to the truth that God alone can awaken the heart, and pray for his arousing converting grace.
- (c) Consider whether by yourself or by the Church generally Jesus Christ is adequately presented in life and teaching in all his health, beauty, and power. The sun shines with inspiring, exhilarating, joy-giving brightness; but to be influenced by it one must be penetrated by its rays. And some even of those who most profess to be Christ's do not show the marks of health and joy.

III.—*Christ shall give thee light.*

- (a) First of all this Lent, let Christ heal the diseases of the soul, that he may go on to strengthen the will. This disease may not be deep, but there is something wrong if the sun does not bring joy; it may be that the will is slumbering, and one may be able to discover a cause for this. Perhaps there is some obstacle between one's self and the light, and one has not the will to remove it.
- (b) Then live in the sunshine, that one may be neither sickly nor morbid. Why live in the darkness of one's own heart? or in a confined atmosphere, unable to stand the strong air of out-of-door life? Dwell much on the gift of forgiveness, and on the strength of Christ, until the joy of it pervades life.
- (c) And bring Christianity out into the full light and under the open sky. Our religion is not a secret cultus to be practised under self-chosen conditions; it asks for the whole world as the sphere of its expression. Let the Christ who moved up and down amongst men, who stopped slavery, who emancipated woman, who converted the western world, illuminate thee as thou facest human society, warned by the beams of his light.

Deeper Examination of Conscience

THIRD MONDAY IN LENT

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in thy sight."—Ps. xix. 14 (P.B.V.).

Picture : the devout psalmist rising at dawn to meditate.

Resolve : deeper examination of conscience.

I.—*The devotion of the psalmist.*

- (a) He rises with the sun (vers. 1-6) and gives his first thoughts to God. Then his devotions direct his mind from the revelation of God in nature to the revelation of His will to man (vers. 7-11). He sees God in all his waking experiences. From the sunrise he learns God's magnificent glory, His universality, and the silent worship of God by creation. In his exultation he compares the rising sun with the glory of a bridegroom (ver. 4). Thus nature speaks to "reason's ears" (ver. 3) when one has learnt the spirit of meditation (see Keble's hymn for Septuagesima in the "Christian Year").
- (b) There is another law beside nature. The psalmist is not a pantheist, or an aesthete. And what a description! The law is "perfect," "sure," "true," "right," "pure," "clean," "enduring for ever," "righteous" (vers. 7-9). Whatever obscurity there may be in it, the blame is not to the law, it must be to himself (vers. 12-15).
- (c) He looks within. He loves that revelation of God in the law (ver. 10), for it "restores," "converts," "gives wisdom," "rejoices the heart," "enlightens the eye," "warns," and carries its own reward (vers. 7, 8, 11). So he prays for conformity to it (vers. 12-15). It is from endeavour towards conformity to it, because we reverence the will of God, that we grow to love it.

II.—*The Christian marvels at the psalmist.*

- (a) As he considers that he had not the revelation of Jesus Christ and His death; of Him who reveals to us the character of sin while opening to us the way of salvation. This psalm is rightly appointed for Christmas Day: the Word in nature is become the Word in flesh.
- (b) As he considers that he had not the illumination of the Holy Spirit, who is the searcher of the thoughts and intents of the heart, whose office it is to convict of sin, to sanctify and illuminate. Yet see what the psalmist says (vers. 12, 13) under the revelation of nature and law. He learns much from meditation.
- (c) As he considers that the psalmist knew not God as Father, who yearns over His children with inexhaustible longing. Yet see what a brother psalmist can write (Ps. ciii. 8-14). These are humiliating reflections for us.

III.—*And so the Christian considers.*

- (a) That the revelation of God in each age, and to each person, is sufficient for what God requires of each one of us. "They have Moses and the prophets . . . neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." The psalmist could examine himself as to sins of infirmity—sins of which he was not aware—wilful sins—the slavery of sin (vers. 12, 13).
- (b) The necessity of reflection (cp. Ps. viii.), and that the great danger of life is in failure to see through superficiality, carelessness, and indifference. We must study the ways of God by thought and in practice. We take little time to meditate upon the revelation of nature, of the moral law, of the Christian character, even of Jesus Christ himself.
- (c) The need of greater depth of character. The psalmist searched his own depths, and felt his dangers, and so knew by the experience of life that God was verily his strength and his redeemer (vers. 12-15). There is great need of experience in the spiritual life.

Involuntary Sins

THIRD TUESDAY IN LENT

"Who can understand his errors?" (A.V.)

"Who can discern his errors?" (R.V.)

"Who can tell how oft he offendeth?" (P.B.V.).—Ps. xix. 12.

Picture: that contained in "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet" (S. John xiii. 10).

Resolve: to consider sin, not merely sins.

I.—Consider the sins of human infirmity.

- (a) They are due to the taint which remains in the regenerate, as sharers in the fallen nature of man. This provides a sphere for progress through response and energy and good will to the supplies of grace. The careless man thinks that "human infirmity" excuses them; he forgets grace. The picture reminds one that the man returning from the public bath soils his feet with the dust of the road. On entering the house he will not fail to wash off the effects of his walk.
- (b) The interior condition finds a field of temptation in external circumstances, even in the mere environment of the material and the temporal. The dust of the road of life will soil his feet, however carefully he walk after he has been bathed.
- (c) But the responsibility cannot be thrown on to "original sin." For apart from the consideration of the solidarity of mankind, there are two further and personal items—my own past individual history, and my present comparatively loose walking with God.

II.—Consider the divine provision for involuntary sins.

- (a) The divine readiness to forgive. Almighty God is mindful of the infirmities which encompass us. The Incarnation has taught us fully what a Hebrew poet had already realized (Heb. ii. 18; Ps. ciii. 14). If in the picture the bath represent sacramental cleansing and absolution, the washing of the feet will be the daily prayer of the child of grace for forgiveness of trespasses, known and unknown.
- (b) But prayer is not only the cleansing of the feet from the dust of contact with the world; it is also fellowship with God and a means of grace, whereby he guards us from evil. The man of little prayer will more frequently sin involuntarily than the man whose life is a life of prayer.
- (c) And the Holy Communion is especially the divine provision for human infirmity, the strengthening of that which is rightly directed. Diligent and careful use of this sacrament is a great protection against involuntary or sudden sin.

III.—Practical considerations.

- (a) To consider more the holiness of God. Our standard is often too low, being little more than what is recognized generally as constituting definite sin. It is meditation upon God which extends our conception of sin. (See Job xlii. 5, 6.)
- (b) To exercise great care in avoiding venial sin. Thus a little general carelessness will sometimes lead to a sudden involuntary sin. Certain sins of temper overtake us suddenly, and we know not how to guard against them; but greater care after a surprise, treating it as a sin and not merely as involuntary, will be a great protection.
- (c) Go deeper into penitence. Begin to realize that penitence is not merely weeping over a grave lapse, but includes the humble confession of a continual soiling of the feet. And penitence includes aspiration. Associate with your penitence the considerations of carelessness in the use of grace, indifference towards progress, tolerance of evil, which does not shock us, making our own standard instead of taking the standard of divine holiness.

Unknown Sins

THIRD WEDNESDAY IN LENT

"Cleanse thou me from my secret faults."—Ps. xix. 12.

Picture : the writer of Ps. li. realizing the truth of ver. 5 of that psalm.

Pray : for spiritual enlightenment.

I.—*Consider that there are many sins of which we are not aware.*

- (a) Our conscience is blurred by sin inherent and actual, so that we are incapable of seeing our sins unless they are more or less glaring. To illustrate this, think how you have noticed others to be blind to their faults, although they are obvious to you. Consider that others are in the same condition with regard to you.
- (b) There is great need, therefore, to stir up the conscience to a healthy dissatisfaction. Suspect complacency above all things, as being dullness of conscience. Raise your standard. Be sure that a readiness to see faults in others is not a mark of spiritual superiority, but is a serious distraction to self-knowledge, and is a measure of the ignorance of your own shortcomings.
- (c) Man's conscience is not the standard of God. Man must raise his conscience towards the divine standard by seeking after him. All aspiration is the effort to attain to that which is beyond us. In the effort, honest and sustained, he will learn his weakness, sound the depths of his sinfulness, and throw himself more upon God's grace.

II.—*Practical suggestions on secret sins.*

- (a) Suspect worse of yourself than you know; and especially suspect in yourself the very thing which you observe to be unseen by another in himself. Ask yourself whether you are immune from such ignorance of self as you see in others.
- (b) Actual disclosures from time to time open our eyes to unseen depths. "How could I have done so!" we exclaim, being ignorant of the extent of our possibilities, which have been indeed hitherto restrained by grace, whereas we have too readily assumed ourselves incapable of them. Now perhaps self-complacency and pride have made it needful that God should reveal us to ourselves by a temporary withdrawal of grace.
- (c) A painful light upon what are commonly called "secret sins," those sins which the psalmist, however, called the "dominion of sin" (ver. 13). At first, by dullness of conscience, they are not clearly perceived in their true character. Later, they are not severely taken in hand, because the conscience is lulled to sleep by the reflection that scandal is not caused; there is a weak resolution to amend, but now it requires a startling shock—perhaps a public scandal—to strengthen resolution. At last conscience is lulled by repeated sin; the particular sin has become a companion.

III.—*Devotional considerations.*

- (a) Examination. Never let a known or suspected sin or tendency pass without probing. We can never hope to know ourselves fully, but we are responsible for progress in self-knowledge.
- (b) It is of God's mercy that our full condition is hidden from us, lest we should lose heart. He draws the curtain from our eyes as we are able to bear. Thus fuller conviction of our state of sinfulness is a mark of progress in grace. Let this truth encourage us to throw ourselves more upon God's mercy.
- (c) Study the life of Christ, that full revelation of man. He knew man. Study also the Gospel record of the inappreciation of, indifference and opposition to, Christ.

Wilful Sins

THIRD THURSDAY IN LENT

"Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins."—Ps. xix. 13.

Picture : our Lord's temptation to throw himself from the Temple pinnacle.

Pray : to be kept from wilful sin.

I.—*Mark the psalmist's sequence.*

- (a) He passes from less to more heinous. Superficial errors ; sins lying at the root of man's being : wilful sins ; slavery to sin. The first two arise from fallen human nature, but either one acts impulsively, involuntarily, or from the corruption of nature over sins without knowing. The second pair are more high-handed and defiant ; there is deliberate consent of will.
- (b) The priestly sacrificial system regarded the distinction ; there were sin and trespass offerings for those ; no offering for these latter (Numb xv. 27-31), which are regarded as blasphemy against God (ver. 30), and the iniquity of them recoils on the sinner (ver. 31).
- (c) The temptation to our Blessed Lord to throw himself from the Temple was temptation to the sin of presumption in its most subtle form ; it was temptation to presume upon the divine promise (Ps. xci. 11, 12) when there was no just ground for claiming it. In far coarser form man's sins of presumption are unjustified abuses of the divine promises ; they defy God to consume us, relying on his mercies. But see his response : "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

II.—*The Christian need not sin presumptuously.*

- (a) He prays "keep back" ; and Almighty God will keep him back if he avoid wilful proximity to the temptation, and put his trust in God. God restrained Abimelech from taking Abram's wife, because of the integrity of his heart (Gen. xx. 6).
- (b) God will keep him back, if he pay heed to warning. David's anger had a great deal of human justification for it in the churlishness of Nabal, and he lived in an age which said "an eye for an eye" ; but it was violently revengeful. He listened to Abigail's words as a warning from God (1 Sam. xxv. 32, 33), and so God restrained him.
- (c) Our Lord's temptation explains the nature of presumptuous—high-handed—sin. It tempts God to overstep the limits of grace and to contradict the character of man's constitution in rational freedom by forcibly restraining him. The parallel to this moral act is, in physical life, as if we threw ourselves over a precipice and expected God to keep us from accident.

III.—*Presumptuous sin is the death of the Christian.*

- (a) See Numb. xv. 31. It is not by God's wilful judgment that man is hardened ; but he cannot change evil into good, nor his own character. He cannot have fellowship with sin. It is the divine dilemma : to save man while God and sin cannot unite, and while man cannot be saved from sin apart from God. If man wilfully choose to sin against God, he cuts himself off from the covenant of mercy within which God is dealing with his sin and expelling its power.
- (b) The Jewish conscience developed. At first there was no remedy seen for wilful sin ; but then that alone was seen to be wilful which was deliberate and awful and final rebellion against God. As the conscience was trained the prophets were inspired to teach a doctrine of repentance and amendment and to make a revelation of mercy (Ezek. xviii. 20-28).
- (c) In the Christian age conscience is yet more fully illuminated by the Holy Ghost, and so God has given a new remedy in the application of the precious Blood to penitents. Admire his exhaustless mercy. But because of this mercy, presumptuous sin is peculiarly heinous in the Christian ; he sins not only against God's majesty, but also against his love.

Slavery to Sin

THIRD FRIDAY IN LENT

"Let them not have dominion over me."—Ps. xix. 13.

Picture: sin as a slavery.

Pray: to persevere in resistance against sin.

I.—Consider the present condition under the dominion of sin.

- (a) The degrading effects. It destroys our energy and hopefulness, and deadens the spiritual faculties. Yet if resistance be not maintained strenuously, we are gradually dragged down to hell, until the whole being acquiesces in the apparently inevitable. The slave may feel at first his degradation; but afterwards he becomes so degraded that he no longer feels his fate.
- (b) How this state of dominion may be recognized. It is only perceived when we begin to fight against it. Its force is realized when the isolated battle is but an incident in a campaign without winter quarters. Hence one sometimes seems to sin more when one begins to face the sin and fight against it.
- (c) How overcome. By clinging to forgiveness and grace. We must throw ourselves unreservedly on the divine mercy, which forgives even the repeated sin, when repented of. And we must be unflagging in our appeals for grace of perseverance and strength as well as for grace of absolution. One great means is to cultivate the devout life diligently, and not to be distracted therefrom by fixing our whole attention on the besetting sin.

II.—Consider some aspects of besetting sin.

- (a) They are often the result of presumptuous sins which have formed habits. But whatever be the degree of individual responsibility in their dominion over us, they are the means now whereby God wills to teach us the great lessons of personal religion in the efficacy of the precious Blood and the power of the sacraments and prayer.
- (b) They teach us the continuity of life. To the end of his days S. Paul regarded himself as the least, because he had persecuted the Church of God. A humbling thought to those who have overcome a besetting sin, and one very profitable for preventing the recurrence of the sin.
- (c) The taint may linger, working in a new way. All our temporary slavery to sin has worked some perversion of character, which will exhibit itself in other directions. Hence how rarely is a Christian character well rounded! Some fault of disposition and temper is the harvest perhaps of past years of submission to temptation. Here, too, is it true that "Be sure your sin will find you out."

III.—Concluding reflections.

- (a) Past sins have made the yoke of Christ difficult instead of easy. Independence of will has made dependence on God's will burdensome. It is good to regard this strain as the temporary punishment of forgiven sin.
- (b) And how great is the loss of joy in the spiritual life, when depressed and weighed down by the power of our temptations! And the loss does not end here; for when we should be able to take joy in the things of the Lord we find that our joy in them is very slight and perhaps a painful effort.
- (c) But the evil of sin's dominion may be defeated by a penitence, which, growing daily in the knowledge of divine mercy, is from very love of God grieved to have offended such love. And it may be defeated by turning Satan's weapon against himself, making his snare only an instrument for defeating him all round by more watchfulness, more self-distrust, more earnest calling upon God.

Sin crucifying Jesus Christ

THIRD SATURDAY IN LENT

"There they crucified him."—S. Luke xxiii. 33.

Picture: the crowd: identify yourself with it.

Resolve: to deepen penitence.

I.—*How they came to crucify him.*

- (a) The crowd was not peculiarly bad; it was a mixed group, of which the larger portion was taken from the average life of the nation; portions of the crowd came from the more zealously religious. But no one had any suspicion of what was being done, for all had failed to recognize and receive him.
- (b) Yet Almighty God had been preparing their nation for this revelation, and now they failed; for they had perverted in themselves the course of the revelation, and a perverted understanding of his will led them into crucifying their Messiah. Mark the deteriorating effects of sin upon the spiritual understanding: it is one of the most awful consequences of sin that it blinds the mind.
- (c) Put yourself in imagination in that crowd. Dare you say that you would not have been one with them in approving of that Crucifixion? Let him that is without sin cast the first stone at that crowd. We are not to think of those Jews as worse than other men; they were the men of their age, as we are; they were the final manifestation of misused Judaism.

II.—*His life offended them.*

- (a) Look now at the more immediate cause of his crucifixion. He had roused their indignation by his silent reproof of their religion: he put to shame their conventional standard, and superficial righteousness; he had openly attacked much to which they gave exaggerated importance, and had spoken truth which to them seemed wicked.
- (b) Difficult to realize what opposition of feeling was stirred up by his life, because we think more of his good deeds than of his life, with its standard so opposed to public religious opinion. The Jews said rightly that they did not stone him for a good deed, but for blasphemy (S. John x. 33). And herein they had the advantage of many of us, who exalt kindness—"love of one's neighbour"—above the honour of God—"love of God." We forget God: the Jews always put him first, even though they perverted the truth.
- (c) Again put yourself in this crowd. We can never do quite what they did, for there is a very great difference between our age and theirs, and our whole standard has been raised by Christianity. But ask whether the same spirit is not yet at work within us: Have I never felt jealousy over another's good? or disliked what I thought was over-goodness? or been angry at goodness in an opponent? Or do I not at times like to depreciate another? Am I ever angry at those whose lives rebuke me?

III.—*Consider more deeply.*

- (a) The degree to which sin manifests itself is largely a matter of surroundings; do not claim credit for what is due to good influences and easy circumstances; average goodness is not worth of character; those who crucified Christ had average goodness; and to crucify Christ is more respectful to him than to be indifferent towards him.
- (b) Consider latent possibilities. How much is the evil within me kept in check by environment and by fear of shame and exposure? Suppose I found a temptation, when there was no possibility of discovery: am I sure that I should resist? Let such reflections lead to a revelation of hidden possibilities, and break down self-complacency. Deepen penitence.
- (c) It was the Jewish nation which crucified him, and not certain men; there is unity of the race. They could not have come to crucify him apart from the history of their race. Consider sin in relation to the history of the human race, from which no one can isolate himself: go below sins to sin, and the human race is knit together in one. Go back once more to that crowd, and take your place there in the drama of sin, as a member of its race.

In Bondage

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

"*In bondage*,"—Gal. iv. 25.

Consider: the burden of the Jewish rules.

Pray: for the spirit of freedom.

I.—*Bondage.*

- (a) This is worse than the unconsciousness of sleep when the bright sun invites to the enjoyment of day; there, indeed, the will requires to be roused, but here the will may be roused only to make one the more conscious of the bonds; or it may be that it is the will which is bound.
- (b) In the appeal to rouse from slumber the address is to Christians; here those described as in bondage are the Jews, not yet set free by grace: S. Paul regards the Christians as the freeborn sons of Abraham, the seed of Isaac; the unconverted Jewish Church is become the seed of Ishmael, the Bedouin Arabs who are in bondage. But unhappily the term "bondage" has many a painful application in the sphere of Christian experience.
- (c) The simile is usually thought of in relation to the passions, and all good Christians should pray for such slaves. But consider that one may be bound in many ways; some are bound to self, slaves to self-assertion or pride; others are in bondage to the world, whether to excitement, or love of recreation, or to its opinion. Set free, they have made themselves slaves.

II.—*The bondage of Judaism.*

- (a) The Christian is under grace: the Jew is under the law. Does the Christian live by grace? In what respect does he find that the power of his life differs from that of a Jew, and where is the felicitation which is the experience of his gifts? (Gal. iv. 15.) Two facts of Christianity must alter a man's whole relation to the bondage of sin, namely that what the law cannot do in that it is weak, Christ has done by setting us free through his death, and that whereas the law can only forbid, Christ gives the power of victory.
- (b) S. Paul did not consider that the Jews had always been in bondage. They had become so by misuse of their revelation, turning a developing education unto freedom into a prison-house with iron rules of petty obligations which fetter a man who should be free. Yet worse is the case of Christians who turn the very principles of freedom into a series of restraints.
- (c) In bondage. The application is to a nation which received a spiritual religion and made out of it a religion of the letter. Examine self in such matters as to the spirit which animates your public worship, the observance of Lent, Bible-reading, private prayers. If many neglect Christianity because they find no pleasure in it, many others are afraid to neglect it, but treat it in the spirit of Judaism.

III.—*Bondage and rule.*

- (a) In the season of Lent one considers whether its rules are not of the nature of bondage. Some of its disciplinary rules may, at any rate at first, be a great burden. To break a heavy bondage, to acquire self-control, to train one's self to good habits, are, however, the education of freedom, if the necessary rules are appreciated and valued for their true purpose. But as it is easy to become a slave to any habit, it is well to see to it that even useful rules are intelligently obeyed.
- (b) It is so difficult for fallen man to live after the spirit, that even the devotional life is very open to the snare of bondage. Always consider that obedience and mercy are preferable to the offering of formal sacrifices, and that it is not only the Jews who could strain out the gnat and swallow the camel. Few rules are so valuable that they should not at times be broken for a higher principle.
- (c) Three great principles have come here for consideration. The law of grace, the animating motive of all actions, and the freedom of sonship. Duty is not a bondage because it is a duty, but because one does not perform it with the filial intention of pleasing God, and in response to his grace. It is bondage to try to lead the Christian life without the power which God gives.

Jesus or Barabbas

FOURTH MONDAY IN LENT

"Barabbas or Jesus."—S. Matt. xxvii. 17.

Picture: Barabbas in the prison: Jesus on the cross.

Pray: to exhibit in life the truth of Jesus Christ crucified.

I.—Consider the cases.

- (a) How impossible it seems to us that any one can compare these two together! how more than impossible that the preference should be given to Barabbas! To conceive of the situation we must remember that Jesus was regarded as a Jewish carpenter who had assumed the office of a rabbi, and was supposed to have impractical nationalist ideas. Such an one also was Barabbas.
- (b) Criticism against Jesus took the form, which is not uncommon even now, although generally slightly veiled, of arguing that the more good and kindly a man is the greater is the danger of men being perverted by his false teaching. In favour of Barabbas it could be pleaded that he had tried to do something, not merely to talk, and that his policy was as orthodox as his religion.
- (c) At all times he who voices public opinion is favoured above him who runs counter to it: and he who represents the public morality and theological opinion is preferred to him who is opposed to either or both. Truth must not shrink from being misunderstood. It is seriously to be considered whether, if Jesus came in our own age, in the form of a man of the times, he would be welcomed by the majority of Christians.

II.—Some aspects of the choice.

- (a) It was a choice between politics and principle. Barabbas represented the former, Jesus the latter. The one took an active part in the affairs of the nationalists, and it was not expected of him that his hands should be clean; the other lived for the truth which even to-day in England is not appreciated except in theory, that principle alone lives and conquers and affects abiding good.
- (b) It was a choice between popularity and contempt. Barabbas was popular, because he was leader in a popular movement; Jesus was despised because the world did not believe that regeneration came through right principles, and did believe that truth was too refined for daily life. The idealist is always subject to contempt, for in most of us the strain of life destroys the love of truth.
- (c) It was a choice of false leadership and envy. Barabbas hit the popular opinion, and became a hero; the leaders envied Jesus because the common people heard him gladly, and he did not worship the popular heroes and leaders. So the leaders urged the people to choose Barabbas, although they knew better; and the people followed their false leadership.

III.—Some lessons of the choice.

- (a) Pilate failed because of his weakness, and his weakness was due to his own misconduct. His position as procurator was not strong, and instead of fearlessly maintaining that there was no fault in Jesus, he weakly tried to manœuvre his release. Knowing that the leaders were moved by envy, he tried to appeal to popular choice, not doubting that the populace would give the other decision.
- (b) Goodness and truth must often suffer at the hands of force; right influence must often give way to bad influence. Barabbas stood for the world's reform of force, Jesus for the influence of truth and holiness. The struggle between the two principles still exists. But in the end truth and goodness win, although defeated. It is the kingdom of this world against the kingdom not of this world.
- (c) The decision did not appear to the Jews as one between a murderer and a holy man, but as one between a true patriot and an impostor. It is the glaring example of the blindness of a perverted conscience, the impossibility of right judgment with a false heart. And so Barabbas was set free and Jesus was crucified for him because the Jews had made triviality and externalism the centre of their religious life.

The Obedience of the Cross

FOURTH TUESDAY IN LENT

"He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."—Phil. ii. 8.

Picture: the lifelong obedience of Jesus Christ.

Resolve: to study the Passion of Jesus Christ this Lent with the purpose of applying its lessons to life daily.

I.—*Aspects of obedience.*

- (a) One word expresses it as the outcome of belief through persuasion. Consider why this word is not used of the obedience of Jesus Christ. It illustrates, too, the relation of faith to obedience: "by faith Abraham obeyed" (Heb. xi. 8) expresses this by the use of another word.
- (b) A second word, generally translated "to be subject to," also expresses obedience: literally it is the being ranged under another. Thus it is said of our Lord that "he was subject unto them" (S. Luke ii. 51). It suggests the discipline of obedience, and the divine order of the created system, in which the Son of Man had his appointed place. For us it suggests much of the divine arranging of a disorderly and undisciplined mind and life.
- (c) A third word springs from the conception of attentive hearing, and in ordinary speech it is used of porters whose duty it is to give an attentive hearing to the door. Thus Rhoda came to "hearken" or to "answer," when Peter knocked (Acts xii. 13, A.V. and R.V.). It is this word which is used of the Divine Son in his life of suffering (Phil. ii. 8; Heb. v. 8).

II.—*The way of obedience.*

- (a) Obedience is only possible to us by hearing the divine voice, and hearing it only possible by attentive listening. "Because when I called ye did not answer, when I spake ye did not hear, but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not" (Isa. lxxv. 12) is the exact antithesis. This is one aspect of the first disobedience, the removal of an attentive ear from the voice of God to listen to the serpent.
- (b) Thus this word suggests the truth that obedience is not conformity to a rigid and external law, but loyal service to the personal will of one's Master: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth"; and its end is delight. "I delight to do thy will" is said mystically of the Divine Son who learned obedience. "His servants shall serve him, for they shall see his face."
- (c) The consideration of obedience as submissive hearing reconciles the activities of prayer and service. There is no rivalry between the two. Communing with God in prayer and meditation is the hearing and understanding of the will of God: to one who obeys the Divine Master loyally, the life of obedience is the interpretation of his prayers.

III.—*Obedience a lesson of the Cross.*

- (a) "As through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous" (Rom. v. 19). This fundamental feature is seen throughout his redemptive life: "I speak to the world the things which I have heard of him." "The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things which please him" (S. John viii. 26, 28).
- (b) "Though he were Son, yet learnt he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. v. 8) is the experimental history of obedience. Does our obedience often go to the length of suffering? Is it not rather the avoidance of disobedience to an elementary and external rule of conduct, a "Thou shalt not"?
- (c) "Obedient unto death." It is the obedience of "Lo! I am come to do thy will," carried up to the extremest point and throughout a life (see Heb. x. 8-10). It is this aspect of the cross as obedience to the will of God which its saving power explains to Christians, and assures them that the cross is the permanent interpretation of Christian life in the presence of evil.

The Humility of the Cross

FOURTH WEDNESDAY IN LENT

"He humbled himself."—Phil. ii. 8.

Picture: the humility of Christ's earthly life, being found in fashion as a man.

Resolve: to learn from the cross the root of humility.

I.—*Preliminary considerations.*

- (a) Humility is essentially a Christian grace: to the heathen it was at best a mean-spiritedness suitable in a slave, at its worst it was baseness. There was no basis for humility in heathenism, which centred upon self: its best ethics were vitiated by the pride of self-conquest.
- (b) Pride is the antithesis of humility, and it will often hide itself under a counterfeit of humility: it may congratulate itself upon its humility, or it may manifest itself under the more subtle form of weakness, which is afraid to use the power and opportunity vouchsafed by God, from fear of failure or sense of unfitness; and this is really the pride of trusting to one's own strength and goodness. But he is beginning to be humble who can be told of faults of which he is not aware, and be quite sure that they are there, and only blindness prevents him from seeing them.
- (c) The lack of humility may often be detected by the self-assertive presence of qualities contradictory to it. No number of humiliating acts will make me humble, or prove me to be humble, if I be touchy or sensitive—two common pricks of pride. So, too, impatience with self or with others and impulsiveness are the lack of distrust in self and a counterbalancing trust in God.

II.—*Learn of me, for I am lowly of heart.*

- (a) Consider him as the example of humility. There was no weakness, no affectation; yet he puts himself before us as the model of humility. Were he other than we know him to be, this would be inconsistent with humility, which in us must ever be unconscious of its existence: the humble Christian is very sensitive to the lingering, ever obtruding presence of pride, the more sensitive to its slightest appearance. But in Christ pride had no place.
- (b) His humility manifested itself through the dependence of creatureliness. Found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself to live as a man by entire dependence on God. Contrast the pride of the first sin, which manifested itself in the desire for independence. We shall never be humble, saving as we depend solely upon God in all things; and in so far as we thus trust in him we shall be humble by the knowledge that to him alone is the merit, while only the failures are our own.
- (c) He manifested his humility to the uttermost upon the cross: in the external circumstances, and yet far more in the interior spirit in which he suffered. He thus became sin for us (2 Cor. v. 21). For a feeble illustration, think whether you can bear an unjust suspicion without any feeling of resentment.

III.—*Growth in humility.*

- (a) The roots of humility are in dependence upon God—an experimental knowledge that "When I am weak, then am I strong,"—and a growing consciousness of unworthiness. These two experiences in the life of sinful men correspond to the two aspects of humility in the Sinless Man.
- (b) Humility is the spirit receptive of grace: "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." And the humble are in a state of grace, for they are learning their duty towards men "In honour preferring one another," and towards God, "Apart from me ye can do nothing."
- (c) A spirit to be cultivated, being learnt from the cross, which is the measure of our unworthiness. S. Dominic, before entering a city, used to pray that he might not bring down judgment on it for his sins. Before I think of humility as a crowning grace, let me learn from the cross at least something of real abasement. "Mea culpa! mea culpa! mea culpa!"

The Love of the Cross

FOURTH THURSDAY IN LENT

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."
—S. John xv. 13.

Picture: the crucifixion in relation to the words, "God commendeth his own love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Resolve: to practise acts of love, which contradict self, for love of God.

I.—*Love.*

- (a) A principle, not an emotion; a command, not an instinct. We shall love most that on which we spend most pains, whether self or another or God; the manifestation of the divine love is the crucifixion. God forbid that I should ever doubt his love to me; but if I waver, I will say to myself that he cannot help loving me, having spent so much on me.
- (b) Love is experimentally a development, while yet the basis of all Christian virtues: it grows through exercise, through the application of principle to action. It is a purpose running through life; I will learn to love; yesterday I was cross, this morning impatient, just now sarcastic; these faults shall give way to a master passion; love shall keep down irritation and contempt, choke up pride and sensitiveness.
- (c) Love shall be a cross to me: "the greatest of these" is not to be acquired cheaply, without purpose, without pain. But how love will enflame when I begin to find it a cross, and so I am proving myself to be a Christian by denying myself and following the crucified Master.

II.—*Love suffers.*

- (a) No reading of the cross can satisfy unless based on the truth that "God so loved"; and no pondering over the problem of atonement will bring light to the understanding unless it face the truth that love *must* suffer.
- (b) And the way of love for us is the same: 1 Cor. xiii. is a study in aspects of the cross: it is love which obeys (ver. 6), is humble (vers. 4b, 5a), endures (vers. 4a, 7), crucifies self (ver. 5b). No wonder that we have found there daily lessons in the greatest manifestation of love.
- (c) And it just is love which receives the suffering: sympathy is suffering with another: love will risk a failure, a rejection, an abuse, and suffers all the while: the more it loves the more it suffers. The love of forgiveness has much to suffer, in accepting the injury which it offers as a sacrifice to Christ. What suffering is there not in the love which can be hurt and bruised, and yet go on loving, because it cannot do otherwise, seeing that it refuses to regard self!

III.—*The training of love.*

- (a) Love is the state of the soul in union with God through the harmony of the cross. Do not take up the cross and expect it not to be a cross: we have but to look at the face of the Crucified to see that it is a cross indeed. Love is very apt to evaporate unless treated practically: do just that which makes you feel the cross.
- (b) Test life by the cross: let offences against love be examined there, until the heart blushes. Let coldness of heart towards God be confessed there, till some warmth is kindled. Make acts of love to God, and turn them into resolutions. The heart which is growing in the love of God sees him everywhere, and loves all in him. Did Jesus Christ die for love of us or for love of his Father? The alternative is unthinkable: he loved the world in love of God.
- (c) Dwell much more on the love of the cross: let it be a permanent element of one's prayers; habitually contemplate this love. Then there will be no need to love for love of him; all love will be centred in him. And he who has to live the life of the cross must draw his inspirations therefrom; and there will be no inspirations unless he approach the cross in the right way, as one who needs it—and finds out daily more and more need of it—for himself, and finds in its forgiveness the life which he is to live.

The Endurance of the Cross

FOURTH FRIDAY IN LENT

"Endured the cross,"—Heb. xii. 2.

Picture: the physical endurance of its weight, while he was carrying it. From this reflect on his enduring to submit to crucifixion.

Resolve: to seek the strength to endure.

I.—*What endurance is.*

- (a) Endurance—patience: two ideas to us, but only one word in the N.T. See what they suggest from a mere dictionary treatment. Endurance: hardness, inured to trouble, having kept a stout heart, held out, survived. Patience: being able to bear, undergo suffering, pass a life of privation, put up with, forbear. What a list wherewith to put ourselves to shame!
- (b) Look at the Greek word which covers these two. It is literally to "stay on," as when "Paul and Silas abode there still" (Acts xvii. 14). And so come the derived senses of to keep one's ground, venture, undertake, abide under instead of seeking to escape. It is much just to keep on firm to the end, and to abide under the discipline of life, as that which God has provided for our good.
- (c) Christian endurance is not the iron will: it is the consciousness of a Hand over us, and the expectation of a present gain in character and a future reward in blessing. Thus the word occurs again and again in those lists of *graces*, which accompany the discipline of sufferings (2 Cor. vi. 4 ff., etc.), and especially temptations (Heb. xii. 7; Jas. i. 3, etc.).

II.—*Endurance as treated in the N.T.*

- (a) Like all Christian graces, its root is in love (1 Cor. xiii. 7; cp. 2 Tim. ii. 10, as an example). The endurance of the cross is one way in which to estimate the love of Christ. Our endurance is likewise a measure of the love shed abroad in our hearts; when endurance fails, is not the keenest self-reproach just this, that self-considerations should have had power to overmatch love?
- (b) The sustaining power of endurance is hope (Rom. viii. 23 ff.). Of him it is said, "Who for the joy that was set before him endured" (Heb. xii. 2). The love out of which it springs sustains in the consciousness of present fellowship and future blessing with him; for "If we suffer (endure), we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. ii. 12).
- (c) What a picture! And it is just here that we fail. We are true, earnest, sincere; but how little breaks us down! We lack the discipline and experience of which this speaks: we shrink from its education. Consider, then, that endurance is a grace: "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience [endurance]" (Col. i. 11).

III.—*The acquisition of endurance.*

- (a) No Christian ever made great progress who lived much either in the present struggles of life, so as to shut out from view the great "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God" (2 Pet. iii. 12), or who faced life in the strength of resolution and determination: "the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ" (2 Thess. iii. 5).
- (b) We are all ready to luxuriate in spiritual sensations; but are we equally ready to endure them? "The trying of your faith worketh patience" (Jas. i. 3). It is said of him that "he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself" (Heb. xii. 3); but indeed his whole life was endurance, a preparation for that last endurance. And we have taken the cross upon us, convinced that it is the way of life. Shall we break down under it? We have certainly not yet "endured unto blood."
- (c) And the endurance of the cross was its victory: there he reigned unconquerable. Therein is our fellowship with him: so long as we think of endurance, and the holding out of strength and resolution, it is a burden; but turn to the cross, in prayer felt and breathed, and let him draw us up, that his endurance may be poured into us: "Out of weakness were made strong" (Heb. xi. 34).

The Self-denial of the Cross

FOURTH SATURDAY IN LENT

"Let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me."--S. Luke ix. 23.

Picture: the great army gathered out of all ages, carrying their own crosses in the procession of the Crucified.

Prayer: to know something of this self-crucifixion with Christ.

I.—*Self-denial.*

- (a) The word suggests to us the continual practice of little acts of mortification. They are profitable, and probably we do not practise them enough. A Christian life without them is an anomaly. A life without self-denial is a life of discontent.
- (b) But to deny *one's self* goes to the root, and could we but do it once for all, no acts of self-denial could henceforth affect us, for self would have been annihilated. To deny Christ is an act of apostasy; to deny self is apostasy against the natural man, in order that Christ may reign supreme in us. "I live, yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20); and in exact equivalent to the words of Christ, S. Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ."
- (c) Consider what this denial of self means to which Christ calls us in fellowship with his cross. Never did he will to please himself (Rom. xv. 3); it was always, "Thy will be done." Yet more deeply is his cross the measure of his selflessness, on which he crucified, by identification of himself with us sinners, that human nature which he never regarded as for himself. And in that human nature he was living when he invited his disciples to follow him in denying themselves.

II.—*Take up his cross daily.*

- (a) Take comfort from these words, Christian: thou art not to make thine own cross, but to *take up* the cross which divine love provides for that crucifixion of self which will draw thee nearer to him in fellowship.
- (b) He calls it a cross, who was crucified for us. It is no petty annoyance to which he would have us accommodate ourselves; its purpose is crucifixion; the denial of the self which we habitually find to be tempting us from our allegiance to God towards an allegiance to ourselves.
- (c) Daily. Here is a paradox of the Christian life: I died to sin in my baptism,—and therefore I must daily mortify the deeds of the flesh. I have been crucified with Christ,—and therefore I must die to self daily. But the paradox is a divine mystery: it is just because I thus died that I have the grace of God to keep under my body: it is just because I have been crucified with Christ that his life in me is to be the joy of losing self.

III.—*And follow me.*

- (a) It is an emphatic statement that Christ did not die for us that we might escape from dying, but that he died for us that we might die to self in his life in us. He bore his cross daily, and invites us to follow him in so doing. He took up his cross daily because it is the solution of human life, the finding of one's true self by losing it.
- (b) And he could offer the invitation just because his death was not only an example, but the means whereby the life, which he lived in his sinless humanity, was to be available for humanity stained by sin. The heathen philosopher could offer the sublimest selfishness of self-control, self-conquest, self-sufficiency. The Gospel offers a crucified Saviour who is the power of our weakness.
- (c) The life which conquers self is made possible in union with his endless life through death. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). Consider that it is not the strength of a great resolution, but the submission of self, up to its denial, to fellowship with him who is our true life, and in whom we find the fulness of life. The centre of our being is not self, however refined, but God.

Jesus hiding and withdrawing

PASSION SUNDAY

"Jesus hid himself, and went out of the Temple."—S. John viii. 59.

Consider: the Temple "left unto you desolate."

Pray: that Jesus Christ may not depart from me.

I.—*Jesus Christ and the Temple.*

- (a) He loved the Temple: at twelve years of age, the Child, who was subject to his parents, found in its attraction a higher principle which for a short time claimed his obedience before his filial attendance upon his natural guardians. In adult life he frequented the Temple; by degrees the Jewish nation drove him out of it, and yet to the very end he loved its precincts. How very different from the false spirituality which finds no peculiar attraction in the house of God!
- (b) He claimed the Temple as "My Father's house"; at the last it became "Your house," and as such was doomed to destruction. Every human construction, religious or intellectual, shares the fate of mortality. The clothing of all truth is temporary; where the clothing is mistaken for the truth, it becomes "yours," and not "my Father's"; and then there shall not be left one stone upon another. It is left desolate.
- (c) But he did not forsake the Temple in disapproval. While seeing that the house of prayer was made by men a den of robbers, he still visited it; it was only left desolate when they rid themselves of him. What divine patience with human misrepresentation and abuse! His disciples must be similarly patient.

II.—*Jesus hiding himself.*

- (a) He did not hide himself from sinners or the world or heathen: he was not exclusive. Nor did he hide himself from discussion and opposition; but three times at least he withdrew from his own people (S. Luke iv. 30; S. John viii. 59; x. 39). He withdrew from hardened obstinacy and from the ignorance which was the result of the misuse of spiritual opportunity.
- (b) His withdrawal was not due to the exhaustion of patience: even in Holy Week he was prepared to give one day to discussion in the Temple. Nor was it due to despair: he never despaired of the purposes of his Father, and his farewell sounded the promise of hope: "Ye shall not see me until ye say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."
- (c) Nor yet was his withdrawal in self-defence, for he went up later to Jerusalem, knowing what was before him. It was a withdrawal lest a worse thing happen to them; a further opportunity to repent. He only put himself in their power when they had finally blinded themselves.

III.—*The withdrawing of Jesus.*

- (a) In Christian experience there is a parallel to all this. The regenerate heart is God's Temple, where Jesus delights to dwell, and, if it is being turned into a den of robbers, he will resist. If this abuse of God's Temple continue, he will withdraw, when he is opposed, lest a worse thing happen. But he is still accessible, only he must be sought and brought back to the Temple.
- (b) This withdrawal of Jesus is a terrible thing. It is done so quietly. Gradually the controversy within the sanctified human Temple ceases, and there is peace—the peace of desolation. Thus the Christian neither needs to change his theological position, nor to abandon his Christian practices; but what was once full of reality when experience confirmed conviction is now a matter of dead routine. Jesus Christ has withdrawn from empty formality, and must be sought.
- (c) The experience is of a grave character; not a loss for three days, when we are surprised to find that he is not with us, but a deliberate and protracted withdrawal. Daily life had become a controversy between the independent self and Christ, and is now content with the calm of his withdrawn presence. Beware lest such a state pass on to the yet deeper stage of crying out that he perverteth the people.

The Cross the Revelation of Sin

MONDAY IN PASSION WEEK

"*They crucified him.*"—S. Matt. xxvii. 35.

Picture : the Crucifixion.

Resolution : acts of contrition and adoration.

I.—*The cross its own interpreter.*

- (a) Many attempts to explain the nature of the atonement, which must always remain too great for exhaustive explanation. Any such attempt necessarily partial and relative to the mind and age of the exponent. The atonement is a fact, and it is a revelation.
- (b) Frequently the atonement identified with the crucifixion, the death of Christ isolated from his life and resurrection ; frequently, too, separation made between the sinner's acceptance with God and the life of the accepted sinner in Christ. To understand the atonement one would need to view it in its accomplished fruit of the New Man perfected in Christ, redeemed humanity, the fulfilment of God's eternal purpose.
- (c) Consider now only the death of Christ, and regarded as a revelation. Seek neither to explain nor to prove to one's self, but to follow out illuminative lines of thought. Almighty God has spoken in this tremendous fact : can I read something that he speaks in it ?

II.—*The supreme revelation of sin.*

- (a) Almighty God sent his Son into the world, holy and undefiled, and the treatment that he received was the punishment of a malefactor ; and that not as the deed of a debased element of the population, but of the average religious portion of a nation which was presumably trained throughout its history for the reception of him whom it condemned.
- (b) Behind this deed lay a long course of history, of failure to rise to the height of progressive revelation ; a long course of spiritual perversity producing superficiality of life, narrowness of vision, and misinterpretation of the divine character. A most startling revelation of the failure of human development.
- (c) This is in truth a universal revelation of the cross. The same failure is upon all human life, a painful sense of coming short of what one even knows that one could be ; a consciousness of blunted spiritual faculties, because of which one cannot attain to the vision of human possibility. There is something wrong with human nature, and not merely with myself.

III.—*The cross and fallen nature.*

- (a) Turn now to the unparalleled scene of Calvary. Dare I say that I should have risen above my nation and generation, and that I should have stood out alone—beside Jesus Christ ? Dare I think that I alone would not have been scandalized in my conventional respectability by the beauty and truth of his life ?
- (b) We, too, like the Jewish nation that condemned him, have a collective responsibility of life, and are the composite issue of national and world history. Each of us, as each of that generation, is largely an expression and a product of his age. And as a humbling reflection consider to how large an extent what one reckons for goodness in one's self is really the result of upbringing and favourable circumstances, or is due to class fear and social fear.
- (c) The root-principle of fallen human nature is written in bold characters on the cross ; that which the New Testament briefly describes as "In Adam all die." But the cross inspires confidence in the revelation of Almighty God just because it measures so fully and so deeply the nature and character of the evil which it was vouchsafed to remedy.

The Agony

TUESDAY IN PASSION WEEK

"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly."—S. Luke xxii. 44.

Picture: the scene in the garden: the eight disciples: the three nearer: himself withdrawn a stone's cast, kneeling.

I.—*External circumstances.*

- (a) A condition of great spiritual tension and trial. He began to fear, and to be heavy and sorrowful unto death: a nameless dread. The disciples had feared: now he fears. In the upper room he had comforted them in the prospect of his withdrawal: now it is he that is in agony. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted."
- (b) A sense of detachment and isolation from human sympathy: the confidence reposed in the disciples at this juncture is rather for their profit than for his comfort: "the heart knoweth its own bitterness." Reverently marvel, and worship him, kneeling a stone's throw distant from a mystery which we can appreciate yet never fathom.
- (c) The scene is a prayer. There are agonies in prayer. He was not too agitated to pray, but the agitation entered into his prayer. "Father, save me from this hour." "If it be possible." Withal see what recollectedness and reverence: he withdraws a little, and kneels down. True deep reverence cannot pass away in moments of strain, even if the form of its expression may perchance be changed.

II.—*Interior considerations.*

- (a) He is the God of all consolation; the Only-begotten and beloved Son, the sight of whom is the beatitude of angels. Was it that he might comfort us with the comfort wherewith he himself was comforted of God? Was it that he might be in all things made like unto us his brethren? Yes, doubtless.
- (b) But yet more! The Passion was begun. The divine victim had come to the climax of his sin-bearing. He waited not for the cross, but went out to meet his Calvary. The sacrifice was consummated in will in the eucharistic sacrament, the high-priestly prayer, the agony. The will, which never swerved, never weakened, consummated itself here in its finality of accomplished purpose. The hour was come.
- (c) A spiritual master has said that the cause of this fear was the eternal misery which sin is preparing for us; the cause of his sorrow was the infinite injury which sin does to the majesty of the Father: the cause of his weariness was the uselessness of his sufferings for so many miserable creatures who persist in the way of perdition. The sight of God so basely insulted, and of so many souls miserably damned, was the cause of his agony.

III.—*He is our example. Consider the virtue of prayer.*

- (a) Prayer for help. "Being in an agony he prayed." Why cannot we pray, when we are most in need of prayer?
- (b) Perseverance in prayer. "He prayed more earnestly." "He went away again, and prayed the third time." "Saying the same words." Do not fear repetitions: there is no reason why you should make them *vain* repetitions.
- (c) Confidence in prayer. Always to a Father. That six times repeated "Father" in S. John xvii. That three-times repeated "Father" in the prayer of the agony. The twice-uttered "Father" on the cross. Lord, teach us to pray.

Thoughts of the Passion. From him, who knew no sin, yet suffered for our sakes, learn to suffer something just for our own sins. And shall we be less able to suffer, because we trust that in God's mercy our sins are washed in the precious Blood? Will not the forgiven much love much?

Passing through this and taking it with us, can we, by asking for it as a favour from God, in the sinner's place of refuge begin to sorrow unselfishly for the insult done to God by sin, all the sin committed just this day in large cities or country villages, in many lands, in wilfulness and in ignorance?

The Scourging

WEDNESDAY IN PASSION WEEK

"Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged him."—S. John xix. 1.

Picture: the scene in the Praetorium. Jesus stripped and tied to the pillar, and scourged by the Roman soldiers.

I.—*External circumstances.*

- (a) It had been anticipated. On the way to Jerusalem he had announced it (S. Matt. xx. 19): yet how entirely had he put the consideration of himself always on one side!
- (b) The delicacy of the narrative. One line suffices in each case: the evangelists shrink in reverence from painting the scene. He was too dear and too divine to them for it to be possible for them to do other than veil the mind from daring to intrude into the privacy of that scene.
- (c) The shame. It was a bitter and cruel punishment even for the hardened backs of coarse ruffians. But for that tender flesh, those delicate and refined senses, those chaste and modest feelings! And the surroundings: no friend near, all coarseness and roughness, a group regarding him as infatuated, perhaps a little "wanting," and so the more suitable subject for cruelty.

II.—*Interior considerations.*

- (a) The perfect fulfilment of the will of God. Isaiah had said, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed." And to him always the Scripture must be fulfilled. Oh! wonderful union with the will of God!
- (b) S. Peter, quoting these words, says, "He committed himself [margin, 'his cause'] to him that judgeth righteously" (1 S. Peter ii. 23, 24). He who became sin for us endured the stripes of the wicked in his own body, while his sinless soul looked to God and said, "The Lord look upon it and require it" (2 Chron. xxiv. 22). Mark the contrast, and accept the vicarious offering). And mainly in this cause we see him offer himself and his sacred flesh in atonement for all the sins of the flesh done by man.
- (c) Mark his regard for the body of his humiliation. He had ever treated it—albeit with reverence—in its own place. He had fasted: he had tried it with vigils on the hillsides. Now it is scourged. Bodily sickness had no part in his experience; but the body shall suffer, if not by nature, then by violence. Not only shall the appetites be curbed, but the flesh racked with pain, insulted with contempt, while the spirit within shall do reverence to its chastity by the shame, the bitter agony, of its refined sympathy.

III.—*He is our example. Consider the mortification of the body.*

- (a) In the seven mysteries of his effusions of blood this comes third: devotionally they are connected with the seven deadly sins, and the virtue of this one is chastity. Here is, for us at all events, a purpose in mortification.
- (b) To the Christian the position of the body—honourable as it is so that the least stain on its virgin chastity is a stain on the whole spiritual being—is inferior to spirit and mind, while with them it calls for training and discipline. It calls for a modified contempt, not to be indulged in overmuch clothing, warmth, sleep, pleasant food, ease of posture.
- (c) Do not allow the eye to contemplate or admire the body, or the mind to think of it in its human form. Be modest at all times, not least when alone. From time to time let the thought of its decay and corruption dwell with you, and of its future glorious reconstruction.

Let us see here more deeply our Lord submitting in love and saying, "Bear ye one another's punishments." Though ye suffer guiltlessly (yet how much better than to suffer justly!), suffer, and by your sufferings bear the guilt of others. Complain not against those whose guilt was the cause of your stripes: nor bear malice against any who may have taught you evil.

The Crown of Thorns

THURSDAY IN PASSION WEEK

"And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews . . . And Jesus went forth wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said unto them, Behold the man!"—S. John xix. 2, 3, 5.

Picture: any "Ecce Homo!" with which you are familiar. See him facing the crowd of Jews.

I.—*External circumstances.*

- (a) The jeering at a religious enthusiast. We indeed see the King whom they laughed at. It is in this mockery that the external circumstances differ from the mystery of the scourging. There the agony of his body: here the insult to his person. We too have laughed at Jesus Christ when we have made fun of goodness manifested in others, or sneered at enthusiasm.
- (b) His isolation. He stands alone facing the crowd. "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me." "Behold the man!" Who can compare with him? "Thou art fairer than the children of men: full of grace are thy lips."
- (c) The misunderstanding which will not be set right. What a parody of the King of love! Few things are harder to bear than the misunderstanding of well-intentioned actions. He bore that he might make his kingship fruitful.

II.—*Interior considerations.*

- (a) One can scarcely think that the taunts at his kingship from such a crowd can have affected him directly: yet to think so is to forget that he loved the men in the crowd and yearned to save them. But further, the scene foreshadowed to him the reception which his claim would receive in the world. It was a prophecy of his rejection by his own people when they should come to understand the nature of his claims.
- (b) He experienced the shame of the name of Christ and suffered beforehand for those who in him were in other ages to be made to feel that the profession of Christianity was beneath the consideration of common-sense people, or the intellectual, or the men of society.
- (c) A deeper tinge of melancholy touches the glory of this mockery. Hypocrisy, humbug, many forms of prostituted religion have become a stumbling-block to the faith, making it difficult for men to profess their convictions for very shame of association with such frauds. The Christian has to bear the burden of all counterfeits. Such shame he first bore who dared to be mocked as an incompetent deceiver.

III.—*He is our example. Consider the virtue of fortitude.*

- (a) Endure shame with fortitude. What is more difficult than not to throw back a false charge with heat; to endure contempt in silence; to be laughed at and to bear it bravely; to be despised and not to resent! Difficult it always must be: in one way only is it possible—by a power drawn from him who when he was rebuked opened not his mouth.
- (b) This virtue can only be acquired by patience and perseverance. It is very difficult to learn if not begun in childhood. Its history begins with control of temper and keeping back the angry reply; it proceeds to the harder lesson of not justifying one's self, then by letting one's self be evil spoken of; it ends in rejoicing to be counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake.
- (c) It requires great detachment, for we must commit ourselves to his keeping who judges right. The heart must be centred elsewhere than in itself or the world, and so be able to disregard any estimate which either self or the world may make.

It is in the Passion that we are considering the five sorrowful mysteries and the virtues which they bid us cultivate. Learn the practical connection—that these graces involve the Passion in their acquisition, even as they are ours in virtue of his Passion.

Falling under the Cross

FRIDAY IN PASSION WEEK

"And he, bearing his cross, went forth into the place called the place of a skull."—S. John xix. 17.

Picture: our Lord stumbling under the burden of his cross.

I.—*External circumstances.*

- (a) His exhaustion. Recall the history of that night. No rest; but the supper, the conversation, the prayer, the arrest, the trials, the scourging. No wonder that Simon was compelled to bear his cross. Do not lose the humility of human sympathy here in his willingness to receive this aid.
- (b) The publicity. He who shrank from crowds is forced to be the centre of a vulgar publicity, compounded of ignorant hate and ignorant pity. None understood the significance of it. Thus can he sympathize with many followers of his cross who after him have had to bear their cross in the rough everyday life of publicity which cares nought for it—saintly priests in worldly parishes, godly laymen in wicked workshops.
- (c) He was sustained by an invincible purpose. This indeed was his triumphal march: the king's procession. He goes forth to die; no failure to him, but at last now is the Son of Man glorified. Men more often fail in purpose than in strength. But mark him on the way to Calvary, "Weep not for me—but for yourselves."

II.—*Interior considerations.*

- (a) Bearing his cross. The real weight which broke him down, yet sustained him, was the cross of which that wood was but a symbol, the world's sin which he was bearing that he might take it away.
- (b) He had said, "He that will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me." For them he was bearing it that in him they might bear their cross: for them he bare it that we might not forget that as he bare it so we, who believe in his cross, must also bear it if we would share in it. He who at all crises of his life prayed, picture him now praying for all who down the ages of the Church should will to come after him.
- (c) The heavy weight of that cross, was it heavier because he foresaw the heavy load of many of his disciples' crosses? Or was it lighter to him because he knew that he was bearing it for them, and would sustain them in bearing it? So too the weakness and weariness of the flesh, was it the more so to him as he foresaw the great weakness and weariness with which so many would have to bear it, sinking under its weight, rising but to stumble again, with no Simon at hand or Veronica to help or to soothe? Or was it light as he anticipated how he himself would keep their feet from falling and lift them up into fellowship with himself?

III.—*He is our example. Consider the grace of patience.*

- (a) How simple it sounds to say to another "Be patient"! how monotonously difficult it is to practise, to continue in patience even for a short time! For there is much suffering in patience. Patience, passive, passion (as when we speak of his Passion) are all allied directly to the Latin word to "suffer." We have seen the fruit of grace in some life of sickness and pain: we have perhaps not watched the long slow history of its ripening.
- (b) Patience is the fruit of cross-bearing. Ample opportunity lies to hand in the disappointments, stupidity, mistakes, delays, disobedience, failures, unkindness, misunderstanding, and those multifarious occurrences which too often find us not abiding in Christ. Press the cross then against you, and ask what the disciple of the cross is doing to forget his daily cross-bearing.
- (c) Perhaps more difficult to balance patience with firmness, discipline, punishment, and right anger. How shall we learn to be angry and yet patient! Such right adjustment is rare, because patience is too rarely a grace vouchsafed from the cross, and too often only the self-restraint of a natural character which is too proud of itself to give away to provocation.

Learn, then, that patience is suffering: it is not that superiority which is too exalted to let itself be tried by men and things which it despises. Patience is the suffering which embraces this fellowship of the cross.

The Crucifixion

SATURDAY IN PASSION WEEK

"There they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left,"—S. Luke xxiii. 33.

Picture: the six hours upon the cross. Then say the words, "He that will come after me let him deny himself."

Offer myself, body and soul, to God, from love to him who sacrificed himself for my salvation.

I.—*External circumstances.*

- (a) It was voluntary, yet with all the appearance of compulsion. When once it was undertaken it was no longer voluntary, save in that he never withdrew his will from still willing it. Nor had it the reputation or credit of voluntariness, but was reckoned as failure, and well-merited punishment. That is self-denial.
- (b) It was as full of physical suffering as were the deaths of the malefactors with whom he was reckoned. The infinite merit of his death in no degree made it less terrible: no miracle was wrought to relieve his agony. How often we think we could do spiritual deeds of heroism, if only the nobility of the intention would take away the suffering! It is not that we do not wish high things, but that we shrink from the pain, the humiliation, the suffering to pride and the like, involved in the process. We fail in purpose under the strain to which it is put, more often than we fail in having good intentions. We would lay down our lives for the brethren, but cannot bear their pettinesses. But just these things *are* the laying down one's life for the brethren.
- (c) He was laying down his life. This had come about as the natural issue of what he had been doing all through his life in an infinite number of small acts day by day, witnessing to the truth, acting against public opinion. That is how the sacrifice of self is accomplished.

II.—*Interior considerations.*

- (a) It is the victory of love through suffering, that love which is expressed in self-sacrifice. Love overstepping all bounds that it may reach to the very uttermost, which strains itself so that there may not be one who can resist it, who might have been won if love had but gone farther towards it.
- (b) The self-sacrifice of love is a complex conception. It is not mere heroism; it involves the sorrows, the sufferings, the sympathy, the unrequited yearning of love. Consider how he suffered for the love of those whom he loved yet who loved him not: how too he suffered for divine love in the heart of his followers, which should sacrifice itself without looking for return.
- (c) Self-sacrifice is double victory: victory over self, and victory in fruitfulness. On the cross he stamped the character of his religion: he reigned there by the utter annihilation of self: and he declared for all eternity the revelation of the mind of God towards us.

III.—*He is our example. Consider the self-sacrifice of love.*

- (a) This love is not to us a natural instinct or passion, it is a chastened and disciplined grace, acquired through the crucifixion and annihilation of self. The Christian must pay the cost of learning to love. But even so, it comes from God, and goes out to others by way of an offering, a sacrifice, to God. It springs out of the cross, and seeks to get back there for its true power and illumination.
- (b) Such love has a history of self-sacrifice. It has no personal end in view. It suffers, it sorrows, it endures. The cross is not worn out nor its passion faded away. It is an eternal principle, inspiration, and power.
- (c) The cross has lifted up the self-sacrifice of love into the highest fellowship with God. Then it is that one is nearest to him when something of that love which died for us on the cross, yet lives for ever, springs up into our hearts from the cross and rules over them, with a unity of purpose whereby, for the love of God crucified, one will sacrifice one's self in love for the object of his love.

The Cross revealing God's Love

PALM SUNDAY

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."—S. John iii. 16.

Picture: the Crucifixion.

Resolution: acts of love and adoration.

I.—*The revelation of the mind of God.*

- (a) Suggestions may throw light upon the mystery of the cross; illustration may help; but when all has been said, one is brought back to the fact that Almighty God has thus willed to reveal his forgiveness through his Son. The cross is the revelation of the heart of God to sinful man; it manifests the divine readiness to forgive.
- (b) All sin is against the love of God; it is the refusal to respond to his invitation to fellowship; it is independence of God. Yet it is he, against whom sin is, and against whose love sin asserts itself, who, while we were yet sinners, gave his only begotten Son because he loves the world.
- (c) And we know that Jesus Christ cannot do other than present the mind of the Father, of whom he is the express image. And this mind of God he reveals to us inscribed in the language of the cross. He who died could but fulfil the Father's will, and by fulfilling it accomplished his purpose, and therein revealed him.

II.—*The revelation of divine love.*

- (a) How great reliance is to be placed upon such a revelation! With what confidence am I inspired, where sin is truly realized by him whose prerogative it is to forgive; where he who pardons is the same who gives his Son to die for the sins of the world; where he, too, promotes the forgiveness by his revelation of himself!
- (b) May he increase my faith! Never will I fear that sin is too great for him to forgive, since he has fathomed its depth: or that if he only knew the worthlessness of my heart he would go back upon his forgiveness; for he even witnesses the rejection of his Son by the objects of his love, and yet holds out the offer of forgiveness.
- (c) Further, the divine love overshadowing our race, redeemed in Jesus Christ, is the inexhaustible expression of the divine value ascribed to the death of Jesus Christ. I may despise, neglect, reject; but Almighty God honours and reverences his Son, and glorifies his crucifixion in the offer of forgiveness attached to it.

III.—*Forgiveness.*

- (a) The revelation of sin—the revelation of holiness—the revelation of love: these combine to satisfy us with the revelation of forgiveness. Forgiveness requires a readiness to forgive and a capacity to be forgiven. The revelation of sin and of holiness, being also the revelation of the readiness to forgive, is the most efficacious means of producing a capacity to be forgiven.
- (b) The capacity to be forgiven is not the same thing as being forgiven. Repentance is only the capacity to be forgiven; it does not even merit forgiveness; but it is produced in us by the melting of the heart under the influence of the revelation of the divine readiness to forgive sin when manifested in the cross of sin's deed and of God's love.
- (c) The cross is to us also the revelation of the eternal faith of God in the fruit of his Son's death. And while he has faith in it, God forbid that I, who so much need its revelation, should fail to believe in it! He believes so much in its power that he forgives upon repentance without waiting for amendment. The cross of Jesus Christ is very powerful with Almighty God; it is the revelation of his own heart.

A Root out of a Dry Ground

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK

"As a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness."—Isa. liii. 2.

Picture: the literal application of the words, "He is despised," to Jesus Christ.

Pray: for grace to be content to be thought little of.

I.—*The words of the prophet.*

- (a) More easy to apply the words as a Christian to him who alone satisfies them than to conceive what the contemporaries of the prophet understood by them. Marvel at the grace of God which enabled the prophet to penetrate into these spiritual truths. "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which ye see." Year by year we meditate on the Passion, and even so the prophet's words sound depths which we cannot fathom. May God give us spiritual desires!
- (b) We shall be more in sympathy with the evangelical spirit of the prophet if we approach the Passion as those who desire to interpret therein their own life. The prophet describes one who through undeserved contempt and suffering was to accomplish the redemption of Israel: and this one the people had rejected as not according to their minds. Is he according to our minds? We must pray for the mind of Christ.
- (c) In these chapters (Isa. xl. ff.) the prophet seems at one time to think of Israel as the servant of Jehovah, at another to be thinking of the more spiritual portion of the nation, and in these sections of the suffering Servant he portrays an individual. The world: the Church: Christ:—how can we separate these in our minds? The mystery of the suffering Servant lies in the history of the world, and he saves the world through the faithful Church which is the fruit of his life of suffering.

II.—*A root out of a dry ground.*

- (a) As the repentant nation looks back, it seeks (ch. liii.) to explain how it was that they did not believe what they heard. He had sprung up as a sapling, as a root out of a dry ground, so unpromising and unattractive. Consider whether he can be attractive to those who walk by sight and not by faith: and further, whether he is really attractive to yourself in his revelation of the Passion, or whether you do not just ignore the aspects which are repellant to the natural mind.
- (b) The true suffering Servant did indeed grow out of the dry ground of humanity, and not like the first Adam. And yet the dry ground did not give the origin to such a root. He is no product of fallen nature, while yet he bore himself as one whom men despised, while majestically moving along his course to the cross of shame for us.
- (c) May we share in this new nature! For he is the root which bears the tree of the Church, giving life to it, and nourishing it from himself with his root hidden in humanity. And so the Church shares this insignificance and undesirableness of her root. And each living member is supplied with this life, if he seek not his own ends or glory.

III.—*No form nor comeliness.*

- (a) Insignificant, unattractive, thought little of! May the words sink into our hearts as we look upon the Passion! How did Nazareth esteem its Carpenter? What did the Jewish rabbis think of their Teacher? Did all men speak well of him? Did he desire popularity, success, consideration? The branch must be like its root.
- (b) And truly he had no form such as was anticipated: he did not fall in with the popular conceptions of the Messiah, and the world could not see below the surface. He had no comely form in society, respected and admired by all: Bishop Milman has marked his commonness, his quietness, his patience, his obedience, and that "the same four marks distinguish the Church's system."
- (c) There is great danger in the temptation of the attractive, the well-spoken of, the successful; it draws away many from Christ, until he asks of us, "Will ye also go away?" As we meditate upon Jesus Christ being reckoned of no account, and read this lesson in his life and cross, pray for grace to say, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

Healed with his Stripes

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

"Smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions . . . and with his stripes we are healed."—Isa. liii. 4, 5.

Picture: Jesus Christ in darkness on his cross.

Pray: for love of the cross.

I.—*Smitten of God.*

- (a) The Servant of Jehovah was attacked and condemned; he was humbled by God. The symbolism is that of a deliverer who did not look his part, and who was ignominiously put down and treated as a criminal. And therefore for such he was taken. But now Israel sees that he was faultless, that he suffered for what was in truth the sins of the nation, and that through his sufferings Israel's delivery is worked out.
- (b) It is perhaps as representative a picture as can be formed of the change of estimate made by a converted Jew in apostolic days. Jesus Christ was really regarded as a blasphemous criminal, one who dared to make himself equal with God. S. Paul must thus have reviled him in the synagogues (Acts xxvi. 11). Oh, wonderful transformation of grace!
- (c) Before such contemplation of the criminal fall down and worship. Confess yourself the servant of such an one, ready to be so regarded for his Name's sake (Acts ix. 16). Then consider; Yea, truly smitten of God, for he came to do his will. Smitten of God for me. Didst thou not pray, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," and it did not pass?

II.—*But he was wounded for our transgressions.*

- (a) There is a great difference between receiving at God's will to be smitten by him and rejected by men, and voluntarily undertaking to be wounded for others. The latter has the halo of heroism; it sustains by its transcendent dignity. The former is not heroism, but saintship. There is no earthly halo around the cross, only darkness. Do not look for a halo.
- (b) To serve God and yet to receive chastisement at his hand: that would be some approach to conformity to Jesus Christ. But dare I say that such treatment is other than my desert? Yet in him one is called even to share with him in the chastisement of others. Some one has said that the priesthood is not a profession, it is an immolation; and all Christian service is sacrifice and suffering. How little have I learned Christ!
- (c) But unapproachably unique stands the cross of the smitten Son of God who was wounded for our transgressions; and unseen by man the whole eternal love of God is focussed upon it as the point which concentrates the whole revelation of creation. Love is sacrifice. Make acts of faith in the love of God.

III.—*And by his stripes we are healed.*

- (a) Two great experiences of personal religion should be again and again deepened in the cross of Christ: the consciousness of sin, and the conviction that by him I am healed. Without these two there is no love of the cross.
- (b) The cross as the rule of life is just hateful unless I love the Crucified One, and am learning that in the cross is the most intimate sweetness of fellowship with him. It is contrary to nature to like to be crucified. Jesus Christ invites us into the innermost recesses of his love—upon the cross.
- (c) He who thinks of sacrifice will never face it. There is a way in which the saints have faced it; by being drawn to it as Jesus Christ has drawn them to himself. Do not think of what you are to endure, or of the hardness of Christ's service; think these things only: "By his stripes I am healed, blessed be God. Draw me, and I will run after thee, my Saviour; no, Lord, I cannot promise that. Bind me to thee, hand and foot, as thou wast fastened, so that I cannot run away. Shew me thy glory, even if it be nails, and Calvary, and 'This fellow'" (S. Matt. xxvi. 61).

As a Lamb to the Slaughter

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

"*He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.*"—Isa. liii. 7.

Picture: the sacrificial lamb led to the place of slaughter.

Pray: for conformity to the cross of Christ.

I.—*The simile.*

- (a) Its force nearly obliterated through Biblical association and Christian interpretation: the lamb is become first a sacrificial victim, and then the symbol of the divine victim. Thus we fail to realize the ignominy of persecution and martyrdom. If we do not forget that those whom we deem saints were regarded by their own age as fools, and not fit to live, yet we do not apply the lesson to ourselves.
- (b) No one gave a thought to the lamb as some Jew was drawing it by a rope to the place of slaughter; it went reluctantly or indifferently to its natural fate. And this is the symbol which the Holy Bible has consecrated as the type of self-sacrifice; no reputation, no credit, just led like a dumb sheep to the slaughter-house.
- (c) Consider very reverently the application of this to the divine victim. Thus was he despised as a fanatic. Every detail of his Passion was externally ignominious, not with the deliberate insult which a debased mob might hurl upon an evangelist, whom they recognized as better than themselves, but as in former days an excited crowd might have treated an unpopular prisoner.

II.—*The revolution wrought by Jesus Christ.*

- (a) To the disciples, however deep their love, this ignominy must have brought the crowning trial of faith. His death under any circumstances dashed hopes, but death in such a form shattered ideals by the shock of disillusion. That the disciples in any degree endured this trial is gigantic testimony to the faith in himself which Jesus Christ had implanted in them.
- (b) It is this Jesus who, by his own death, has manifested that the ideal of self-sacrifice lies just in this: he has taught us that if our mortification is esteemed by the world we already have our reward. He has taught us to go much deeper than the reflection of self-satisfaction; the Christian, knowing that he cannot do other than he is doing, becomes under trial self-unconscious; brought into fellowship with the Truth he becomes the lamb brought to the slaughter-house by his Master.
- (c) There were martyrs before Jesus Christ; but those who most resembled him are they who suffered without knowing that they suffered for righteousness' sake. We Christians, adoring the Crucified, have idealized his Passion, and turned the shameful cross into a symbol of glory. If therefore our cross is to become glorious, it must gain its glory as he transfigured his cross.

III.—*Marks of our cross.*

- (a) Knowing that the cross means suffering we yet expect the glory of the cross. We sign ourselves with the cross without being ready to bear its contempt. But he who made the cross glorious was despised; no one regarded his suffering with consideration or respect. It is the cross for us when we experience that mortification does mortify and not feed pride or nourish sentiment.
- (b) The Christian must first see in him a beauty which he desired, and the cross of shame must shine with a divine lustre which is dimmed if the earthly shame be taken away. There is grave danger in voluntary mortification, but to be led at another's bidding, lamb-like, to the slaughter of self, is to have seen something of the change which has transformed the gibbet into the cross.
- (c) To learn all this in him is to be entering into the mystery of the glory of his Passion, who was despised and rejected, and whose eyes are ever upon such, especially if they are such for his Name's sake. We can only approach this life of conformity through the deeper realization of penitence, and the preliminary stages of the mortification of the will.

The Passion and the Blessed Sacrament

MAUNDY THURSDAY

"The same night in which he was betrayed took bread."—1 Cor. xi. 23.

Picture: The scene of the last supper, and Judas.

Resolve: increase of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

I.—*The night of betrayal.*

- (a) Oh, marvellous love! This night of all nights canst thou do this? Does thy heart never waver in the confidence which it reposes in man? Wilt thou even now trust thyself to men in the future, and give thyself into their hands? "Ah, my son; I know the power of the gift; the Blessed Sacrament is stronger than the heart of man."
- (b) Oh, wonderful devotion! Thou hast a baptism to be baptized with, and how art thou straitened till it be accomplished! Thou hast set thy face towards Jerusalem, knowing what is before thee, and not even a betrayal into it shall turn thee from thy purpose. Thou wilt let thyself seem trapped into what is of thy free will, and thine own nation will triumph over thee in ignorance. "My child: that is the way of righteousness and of self-sacrifice."
- (c) The night that fixed his death is the night which provides for the future. No later occasion remains; no earlier occasion is appropriate. The last meal of material fellowship inaugurates for us the feast of spiritual food. Thou wouldest shew us that thou art never more distant from us than thou wast from thy disciples, nay, by that death to which thou wast passing, that thou art far nearer to us.

II.—*The eve of the Crucifixion.*

- (a) From this institution of the Blessed Sacrament, in which, already offered in will, thou givest thyself to us, thou didst go forth to die. Apart from thy death it cannot be. How clear hast thou made this to us; the Body broken, the Blood outpoured, Body and Blood separate, and the Body first in which thou didst suffer death, and then the Blood which is the life thereof, life through death! Yet, Lord, we can receive this eternal gift, and think, oh, so little, of thy precious death.
- (b) But closer to thyself wouldest thou draw us in this gift of thy dying moments. For thou hast bequeathed it to thy spiritual offspring, the Church, which thou dost uphold by thy awful sacrifice, first purchased with thy blood. And in thy Church we receive the fellowship of thy death; it is the power of thy cross in redemption and in conformity.
- (c) Lord, when I think of thy betrayal, how full of shame I am! How oft have I not only been ashamed of thee, but even betrayed thee! And here, too, what betrayals of thee in the Blessed Sacrament!—betrayals of faith in the fruit of victory won by thy blessed Passion, of the power of thy Body to conform me to thy likeness! Alas, too, I have received thy Body and betrayed thee afterwards in my life.

III.—*Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.*

- (a) Consider at this season how great should be our devotion to this Sacrament of his Passion, and that not only in sympathy with such suffering for us, and devotion to us, but in worship of such mighty mystery of life through death, issuing out of redemptive victory.
- (b) It is devotion to his sacramental life which most of all gives us devotion to him in his Passion, love of his cross, and the mind that is in him. Consider how neglect to grasp these central truths of the Blessed Sacrament has caused neglect of this sacrament in England, and has brought about a selfish religion, which has no place for abandonment of self, possessions, ease.
- (c) Renew from these words your faith in the heart of God revealed in Christ Jesus; and do not lose courage to intercede powerfully for the most arrogant and abandoned of sinners: pray for the lapsed; God is honoured by such prayers. Offer with your intercessions your own forgiveness for any who betray your love or confidence.

My Crucifix

GOOD FRIDAY

"Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified."—Gal. iii. 1, R.V.

Picture: your crucifix.

Resolve: to meditate on my crucifix.

I.—*The sacred head.*

- (a) The seat of the intelligence. To fix the attention on this part of the crucifix is to remind one's self that he moved towards his cross with the clear deliberation of purpose, knowing it to be the Father's will. He waited upon the unfolding events as one who realized that "My times are in thy hand." Even now he is giving himself to die: he is fulfilling his mission; he is not being defeated.
- (b) Consider that his sacred head had been caressed by a devoted mother in the days of his infancy; now it was crowned with thorns. When he was in his ministry he had not where to lay his head, and now it had been struck in mockery (S. Mark xv. 19).
- (c) The head is the ruling part of the body. In the Body corporate he is the Head. Fix the mind on that, and learn therefrom the lesson of the crucifix. That which the Head has done for the Body, the Body shares with him. All initiation is from the Head, but he works through the Body, and in it by his own power he reproduces the experience of the Head. Am I becoming conformed to his crucifixion? What he does for me, he must do in me.

II.—*The arms.*

- (a) Stretched out upon the cross. Consider them spread out in prayer to God. The crucifixion is, on his part, an act of obedience and an oblation. Therefore his crucifixion is intercession. It is good that one pray at times with the arms stretched out, to realize the value of prayer in union with his merits. And the spirit of the cross should enter into one's life of intercession.
- (b) Next consider the arms outstretched to embrace you and all the world. "All the day long have I stretched out my hands to a gainsaying and disobedient people." His arms are stretched out east and west, for so far as the east is from the west, so far hath he set our sins from us. In these arms, too, he embraced children. Learn to say Eph. iii. 17, 18 with S. Paul.
- (c) See those hands, laid upon the sick: with them he wrote upon the ground (S. John viii. 6-8, 11). He stretched out his hands to bless. S. Thomas spoke rightly (S. John xx. 25); the blessing of Christ must come from out of his glorious Passion; it must be the benediction of the pardoning blood. These hands have consecrated the Sacred Host; think how he gives to you the broken body with his nail-stricken hand. Say, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him."

III.—*The feet.*

- (a) "Beautiful are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings." Think of the ministry of those feet. S. Paul bids us have our feet shod with the preparedness of the gospel of peace: contrast your own wayward feet with his, and think of the Good Shepherd, leaving us an example that we should walk in his steps, for he has said, "Follow me."
- (b) Consider the gradual restraint of his feet as the ministry proceeded, till at last he must not even go to Jerusalem, except when his hour was come. And now his feet are pierced together. And yet we rebel if we cannot do all that we wish to do, or if any constraint is put upon us.
- (c) Once more consider those feet, kissed with penitent love, which Simon would not wash. But it was he who washed his disciples' feet. Oh, Minister of humble service, what emperor would not now wash thy feet? Yet do we not obey thy word, to wash one another's feet. If faith is not strong enough to embrace thee on thy cross, yet may we cling to thy feet, and kiss their wounds with penitential love.

The Rest of Jesus

EASTER EVE

"My flesh shall rest in hope; because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption."—Acts ii. 26, 27.

Consider: the rest of Jesus Christ in the tomb.

Pray: for the faithful departed: for a good death.

I.—*Jesus Christ in the tomb.*

- (a) At last he rests. It is a wonderful rest; the world has not seen its like. The wearied broken heart is stilled. One wishes to think of him to-day asleep in the new tomb, guarded by angels, watched by the faithful. But think of him triumphantly at rest; it is the sleep of victory. "O Lord Jesu, resting in the grave, rest in my heart and give it rest."
- (b) And as you so think, prepare for your Easter Communion to-morrow. He seems to say, "I sleep, but my heart waketh." He is sleeping in his tabernacle, silent, motionless, dead as we say. And yet while his body rests his Godhead is not separated from him. Therefore the Holy One suffers not corruption. The Eucharistic gift of the finished work of Christ, which seems to the indifferent communicant to be so lifeless, is truly alive with the unending life of his immortality,
- (c) He gives his sacred Body broken and his Blood outpoured to rest in the tomb of the believer's heart. And he makes our hearts a tabernacle guarded by the holy angels and to be watched by ourselves. And he seeks to rest there. But while he sleeps his heart wakes. He guards us while we cherish him, and he rests to rise within our hearts in the power of his risen life.

II.—*He has lighted up the grave.*

- (a) Who does not thank him for the revelation of to-day? Be not unmindful of the resting-places of the Christian dead. Where the tired body rests there is Jesus Christ guarding the hallowed dust against the day of resurrection. Do not think lightly of the body which has been united with the Christian soul in the unity of a human person. The body is part of the man; and it has shared in the redemption.
- (b) Unlike his body, our bodies see corruption. But his presence in the tomb, and the preservation of his sacred body from corruption, are the guarantee to us of the restoration and glory of our human bodies. "I believe in the resurrection of the body."
- (c) Follow in thought the flight of the human soul to the realm of departed spirits. Here, too, it is in company with him: "He descended into Hades," and in his keeping the faithful departed are eternally safe. Naught can henceforth separate them from the love of Christ. Taken aside for quiet retreat with him, we may leave them in his hands.

III.—*My own end.*

- (a) One day I too must die. A solemn thought, but one best thought of while Good Friday is still so near to the mind. The fact is as certain as the time is uncertain.
- (b) Then there will be only one possession to go with me into the tomb and to the place of departed spirits. Jesus Christ has penetrated these mysteries, has illuminated them by his divine presence, hallowed them. He has made the grave a gate of resurrection. "O Lord Jesu, prepare me for my last hour: suffer me not from any pains of death to fall from thee."
- (c) Seek grace, while life shall last, to think more seriously, more hopefully, more Christianly of this last hour, and of the One who alone can be one's stay in that day. Make every Communion a viaticum. "O Lord Jesu Christ, who didst rest in the tomb that thou mightest make it a bed of hope, prepare my heart for the glorious Easter Day."

Holding him by the Feet

EASTER DAY

"Held him by the feet and worshipped him."—S. Matt. xxviii. 9.

Picture: Mary Magdalene holding the risen Lord by the feet.

Resolve: bold advance along the road of Christian progress.

I.—*The record.*

- (a) The first recorded appearance is to Mary Magdalene, but the narratives differ widely in circumstance. It is not wonderful that in the startling events of Easter Day, and the different groups to which he appeared, later reports should be very inaccurate in their details. Beside the fact that it was to her first, there is agreement also that she had been to the tomb to pay reverence to the dead body, and that when he made himself known to her she wished to cling to him (S. John xx. 17 and S. Matt. xxviii. 9).
- (b) But was she alone when he spoke to her, or were others with her? And was it in the garden or on the road? Recognize frankly that the details cannot be ascertained. If we meditate devoutly on Mary among the grave-clothes while the risen Jesus is standing just behind her, see to it that we do not do like her, making more of the material details, which are only of curious interest, than of the spiritual truth revealed to her and to us.
- (c) In essential features, which at first seem trifles, there is broad agreement. The recognition came through the familiar salutation: "Hail" (the ordinary Greek salutation, representing probably the Aramaic "Peace"), or "Mary." (Swete refers to S. John x. 3, 4.) It was not she who found Jesus, but he who found her, now as before. And the past reality of the spiritual life enables her to recognize him in his new revelation. It is the same Jesus, although he is seen in new experience. And in both narratives she carries the news to others as his messenger.

II.—*The love of the penitent.*

- (a) "Out of whom he had cast seven devils." Hers was a devoted love, the penitent's love; but she was inclined to live on the past. She sought to embalm the Jesus who had forgiven her; she clung to the grave of her former life. She had yet to learn the *life* of the Gospel: "Behold, I make all things new."
- (b) Lent has been penitential. We have felt our sins. Before Easter we were cleansed anew in the precious Blood. But have I renewed my strength? Have I come forth into the day which the Lord hath made? Am I too powerless to grasp the Resurrection and to enter into the Easter of new life, fresh undertakings, further unfoldings of his inexhaustible friendship?
- (c) To be forgiven is the beginning, not the end. To have power to cast off past sins is a preparation for life, not the end of being. We must pass with Mary from the Jesus of pity to the Rabboni of the Master. He must reveal himself anew to us, the same yet in a new form. Good for us, who live common lives, if we can see the power of the Risen One in the work-a-day garments of the gardener (S. John xx. 15).

III.—*Held him by the feet.*

- (a) Out of the past is the new life built. Only when she will cling to that past, does he bid her go forward. "Touch me not"; i.e. "Hold me not down, for I am not yet ascended."
- (b) Yet we may picture Mary at the feet of Jesus. What memory of the day when she embraced those feet without check, and wept over them unrebuked!
- (c) The same feet. Yet now they have the marks of his Passion. Ah, Mary! Dost thou enter now into the secret of thy forgiveness? It is not in the first blush of penitence, but in many an after Lent, that one is to learn this mystery of redemption. Thou dost cling in self-absorption to him; now thou seest the Lord of life.

Alive from the Dead

MONDAY IN EASTER WEEK

"Which said that he was alive."—S. Luke xxiv. 23.

Picture: the empty tomb.

Prayer: for the power of Christ to be manifested in my life.

I.—*Dead and alive.*

- (a) On Good Friday hope fled because faith died. For a power they had found an end of power; for companionship they had found death. Inspiration of ideas might remain, but it became a dream, for the inspiration was himself; they had not become separate centres of existence, nor indeed had he ever desired to make them such.
- (b) Under the influence of his presence and its vitality, they had not contemplated their new life apart from himself. Whereas dependence on another beyond a certain limit becomes weakening, he had always sought to encourage dependence upon himself. The excess of power which is often enervating was, in his case, energizing, for his power was communicable.
- (c) For his was life at the highest; not life which was selfish and absorbing, but life which was vitalizing. Hence when he died they died, when he lived they lived again. It explains the effects of the Easter revelation to his disciples. They did not know the effect of his death, nor did they know what he would do next; but they realized at once that the fact of his being alive recovered them from their stupor, and renewed in them that life which had changed their existence since first they knew him.

II.—*A name that thou livest, and art dead.*

- (a) Sardis—a city of the past, living on its past. A type of Christianity without the Resurrection. Contrast the prodigal son, who was dead and is alive again; dead while he was alone, living his own life, alive again now that he was restored to his father in renewed sonship and inheritance.
- (b) Like dead Sardis, the disciples ceased to live as soon as their life was a past expression; like the prodigal son, they lived again as soon as the fellowship was renewed. It illustrates aspects of the broken-off life of Christians who, by unrepented sin, have cut off their life in Christ.
- (c) But many Christians, without definitely turning away from the Christian life, are none the less dead because they live in the past, in the memory of a former experience, while the present life is powerless because devoid of present strength and fellowship. And many Christians have never realized such a life; they have accepted Christianity to be a good life and a past historical event in Jerusalem.

III.—*The power of an endless life.*

- (a) That is the power of the Sacraments; they are neither a memory nor a symbol, but the conveyance of fellowship and energy. A sentimental Christianity supposes that it can live upon an impression; but neither did the disciples live upon an empty tomb, not even upon the enthusiasm of its emptiness by reason of the Resurrection. They lived, and we live, upon the power of his communicated life.
- (b) Before his Crucifixion he was straitened in the sphere of his human life. After that he was risen he spoke of peace and power (S. Matt. xxviii. 18; S. Luke xxiv. 36). The peace was the victory of atoning death; the power was the divine power of life which was now to be imparted to them. He made peace; and power was given unto him.
- (c) Thus the union of Christians with him is in his risen life; the vitality of victory is communicated to them. We are risen with him, and must live in vital union with his risen life of victory, to be realized in the fruitfulness of prayer, in the strength which is not our own. The empty tomb is the symbol that he is not restrained.

The Stone rolled away

TUESDAY IN EASTER WEEK

"Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? . . . The stone was rolled away."—S. Mark xvi. 3, 4.

Picture: the holy women perplexed at the empty tomb.

Prayer: that I may know Christ risen, whom no stone of obstacle can hold.

I.—*The holy women.*

- (a) Mark their devotion. Personal love drew them that Easter morn to satisfy their devotion to his memory; they would anoint his dead body. Its strength made them for a time unconscious of the difficulties in their path. Love will often annihilate obstacles, so that it can undertake the impossible.
- (b) Their devotion manifested itself in perseverance. The strength of perseverance lies in the object which calls it forth. They never thought to turn back, when they remembered the stone: love drew them, and they sought for a remedy; they could not give up the purpose of their visit.
- (c) The history of personal devotion to Jesus Christ is not unlike the experience of these holy women: it is a chequered history, not all in the open vision: love and perseverance struggle against difficulties. We are drawn to the resting-place, whether some quiet home of Bethany, or the sanctuary of the heart, or in the Blessed Sacrament; but again and again we raise the difficulty of the stone, or we seek a dead Christ when he is risen.

II.—*The stone before the door.*

- (a) Some earth-born cloud arises which hides him from our sight; we wish to find him, and lo! there is a stone of offence between us. And our faith is not such as can remove mountains; it need not even be a very great stone which impedes; probably some anxiety which has taken possession of us, or a grievance nursed, or the disappointment at a prayer seemingly unanswered. But it may be a greater stone; the stone of heavy sin is rolled away, but the peace of justification comes not, for we have not grasped the power of union with the risen Christ.
- (b) The stone has two sides to it: from the outside it is an obstacle which hides us from his presence, some conflict of emotions which has temporarily caused us to transfer our own feelings to him, as though any stone could keep him in prison. From within it is the guardian of his sanctity, which preserves his presence from an unfaithful approach, not mindful of his all-power.
- (c) "The stone was rolled away." Consider that the angel did not remove the stone in order that he should not be confined to the tomb, but to do reverence to the Conqueror. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates: and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." The angel was his minister, not his deliverer. But the stone was also removed for the reward of persevering love and devotion. There are many obstacles in the way of loving devotion, which are thus rolled away by the God-sent angel, when we have exercised a little perseverance.

III.—*An Easter sepulchre.*

- (a) How often have the disciples of the risen Christ pictured him to themselves as passive and powerless! A sepulchre still to us, although he is risen in the power of eternal life; and we bring our sweet spices to anoint his dead body, the spices of sad and sombre hearts, the offering of love, but not of joyful faith: Holy Saturday gifts intruding upon the everlasting Easter. Christ is one who had died for us: he is to become one who is alive for us for evermore.
- (b) "Ye are straitened in your own affections" (2 Cor. vi. 12, R.V.). There was no constraint in him: when they looked to see him bound in grave-clothes, they found nothing but emptiness. When we look for Christ in the tomb of death, in the gloom of miserable introspection, in the darkness of restless moods, in the misty tears of heaviness, we cannot see the facts as they are; even the angel voices, which communicate to us the glorious truth, leave us trembling and amazed, until at length we face the open garden and hear his voice.
- (c) There are many experiences in the history of a Christian life. Not at every moment do we see and worship a risen Christ; but only then can we go and tell the disciples that we have seen the Lord. We look for a dead Christ when we look for him in anything but power and the beauty of holiness.

Jesus our Guest

WEDNESDAY IN EASTER WEEK

"Jesus himself drew near and went with them."—S. Luke xxiv. 15.

Picture: the two companions—and the Third.

Resolution: to make increased devotion to the Blessed Sacrament the way of further fellowship with Jesus in the risen life.

I.—*The friendship.*

- (a) Easter Day is the day of spiritual friendships. Peter and John run together; the women are together; here are Cleopas and another. These friendships were not made by the Resurrection. They were tested and cemented by it. But they were none the less made, as all friendships should be made, by the common bond of Jesus Christ: he was at the centre of their lives.
- (b) Such friendships were drawn closer together by the strain of those few days; and now they were blessed together. If Mary Magdalene was seen alone, she was not allowed to remain alone in her joy. If Peter was seen alone (ver. 34), it was the hastening of the Risen Lord to give absolution and to strengthen the life which was the weaker because of past transgression.
- (c) The exceptions to his revelation on this day were those who had shut themselves off from the fellowship of friendship. Had Judas already tried to flee from the presence of God by rushing headlong into it? Thomas lost a whole week by isolation. But Cleopas and his friend had a wonderful revelation, and the Ten had their corporate reward.

II.—*The communications as they walked.*

- (a) They were talking freely of what was in their hearts, and they were sad, mystified. Is it not just such friendships, helpful and honest, in which there is also a Third, unseen or unrecognized, who directs the conversation, and opens the heart to speak freely? And such a fellowship of friendship gives freedom of speech, so that they could talk plainly and naturally to the Stranger by the way (see S. Matt. xxv. 40).
- (b) Blessed is he who has known something of the character of this walk; when the heart has been burning, as the living word has been opened in the sacrament of speech, and his will intensely realized; or may be the error of life has been seen, or the perplexity of faith has been solved through spiritual fellowship rather than through intellectual solving of doubts.
- (c) Two are thrown together, as we say, in one room, or in the same house. And Jesus draws near. Can he join in that fellowship, and walk with the two? Will heart expand to heart as he wishes to join in the conversation? Two walk together in the way of life, which should be to them a sabbath's rest; we call them husband and wife. Is the Unseen Guest interpreting their life to them?

III.—*Jesus their Guest.*

- (a) They had to constrain him. He will not force himself upon us. An Easter lesson here; they have talked of his Crucifixion, and he has led them on to the dawn of a fuller life. A good Lent and a good Easter have made the heart burn: but now we are back to common life, and he makes as though he would go on. We must constrain him to come into this common life.
- (b) Such fellowship in daily life has behind it a long acquaintance. He had broken bread with them before. But now the old experiences are to open up new interpretations. As soon as through the past experience they recognized him in the new life, he vanished—not leaving them, but abiding unseen. They were learning a higher fellowship.
- (c) We apply these thoughts to our chief experience of the presence of the risen Christ in our lives. It is through the Eucharist, wherein he reveals himself dead and risen, wherein he reveals himself in the fellowship of life, wherein he reveals himself in the surroundings of daily life, its bread, its family table, that he hallows common life.

Jesus Christ One, before and after Resurrection

THURSDAY IN EASTER WEEK

"He is risen."—S. Mark xvi. 6.

Picture: any familiar picture of the Resurrection.

Resolve: to use frequently the words, "When I am weak then am I strong."

I.—S. Paul and the Resurrection.

- (a) His experience may have assisted him to grasp clearly the theological importance of union with the Risen Lord. He had seen the Lord as definitely as any of the apostles (1 Cor. ix. 1), and he, as they, was a witness of the Resurrection (Acts i. 22; iv. 33; ix. 17; 1 Cor. xv. 4-9). But, unlike them, he was not acquainted with the pre-Resurrection life as a disciple, even if, doubtfully, he had perchance seen him.
- (b) Our Blessed Lord himself had emphasized the importance of his resurrection life. "Touch me not," seems to imply the check upon a human attachment which would have concentrated itself upon the days of his flesh, and would have failed to rise to the cycle of truths which followed out of his Resurrection as the issue of his great victory.
- (c) It is not improbable, from certain references in 2 Cor. x.-xiii., that the Christ party in Corinth seized on S. Paul's insistence upon the theological value of the Resurrection as an attempt to elevate his risen life out of due proportion (2 Cor. v. 16; iv. 10, 11, etc.). It is the same radical flaw in the modern eagerness to seek out the historical Jesus of the Gospel records, as though his bursting of the bonds of death was merely incidental.

II.—The oneness of Christ.

- (a) It is not in the least that S. Paul disparaged the pre-Crucifixion life as though by his insistence upon union with the risen Lord he would substitute a spiritualized life of Christ for the solid reality of his human flesh. S. Paul's mystical teaching involved no diminution in the importance of the Incarnation, but an advance in its manifestation.
- (b) The risen life is not contrasted with the pre-crucified life as though it involved a retreat from the humiliation of God having taken to himself a human body. He who appeared to him on the road to Damascus was *Jesus* (Acts ix. 5: cp. ver. 17); he who rose was the same who died (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4); S. Paul's whole cycle of teaching upon the human body, its sacredness and its resurrection, is entirely based on the resurrection of our Lord's human body.
- (c) Indeed, the whole value of S. Paul's teaching of the risen life of Christians is dependent upon the oneness of Christ in the unfolding of his human experience through weakness to power. But Christians cannot be members of Christ in his life before the Crucifixion, when as yet his human body was not available for such extension, until through the victory of death he passed into the triumphant powers of the risen human life.

III.—The Church and the Resurrection.

- (a) We are to be sharers, therefore, not in his weakness, but in his power; to be united, not to the cross on which he was to lie, but to the cross on which he has lain victoriously. And yet we are to mark that it was a cross which was the scene of his victory, and that his victory was through death. United with him, we experience the victory, and do not merely reap its fruits without fellowship.
- (b) Is it not here that we so generally fail in our lives? We acquiesce in weakness and failure, and do not grasp that his weakness and his failure were the conditions of his victory; nor do we appreciate that whereas our own weakness and failure are anything but the conditions of victory, his victory and power are ours to make us sharers through his risen life in a weakness and failure which are the spiritual conditions of victory.
- (c) Verily the truth is so far beyond us that we can scarcely grasp its reality; we are the Church of the Resurrection, of which the key-notes are victory and power, and yet such through failure and weakness. May we at least realize our own natural weakness and deadness so clearly that we may seek his strength and life! May we realize his spiritual life so strongly that we shall reject as defeat all success which is not after the pattern of his victory through the cross!

Easter Joy

FRIDAY IN EASTER WEEK

"Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."—S. John xx. 20.

Consider : the disciples after his Resurrection.

Resolve : to cultivate Christian joy.

I.—*The disciples' joy.*

- (a) The rebound from ruined hopes. They *had* hoped that it would be he who should restore Israel (S. Luke xxiv. 21). It cannot be denied that most if not all sadly acknowledged disappointment and disillusionment on Good Friday. The exception is probably his Mother, but it is not possible to be certain.
- (b) The joy of love. Had he not risen their life could never have been what it had been. He had taken them out of themselves, revealed to them unexpected depths of human nature, raised unquenchable ideals, filled them with a love of which nothing could rob them. But the love treasured in memory now gives place to the renewed love of restoration.
- (c) An extended joy. His resurrection was no renewal of the old life, it was a wonderful revelation extending and interpreting it, whereby old things became new, and hard sayings began to find explanation. It was a joy which only Pentecost could begin to unfold; but they already knew that it was theirs, even while he was not with them in the old manner. Their joy was raised to a new plane.

II.—*The unfolding of their joy.*

- (a) Somewhat analogous to their experience is the joy which fills a Christian after a period of doubt or unbelief, or a time of heavy depression, whether following upon sin or otherwise brought about. There is the joy of forgiveness or of restored favour, gradually realized in the renewed fellowship with its sense of power and lightness of heart.
- (b) Now the disciples of our Lord never lost that Easter joy; it endured through the experience of trials and persecution, and made them rejoice to share in Christ's fellowship and sufferings. It is an undeniable fact that joy was an abiding characteristic of early Christian life: it was recognized by S. Paul as one of the chief fruits of the Spirit. And to-day it is as certainly not the striking feature of our religion.
- (c) Now when the disciples saw the Lord it was the conviction of a revolutionized life, under the Father, and made victorious through the death of Jesus Christ. So he had always said; and now he gave assurances thereof by his ascension and the gift of the Holy Ghost. And to the early Christians life was revolutionized; the outcasts became children, the weak victims of passion were filled with power.

III.—*Our own Easter joy.*

- (a) Following upon a good Lent there is a deepening experience of renewed penitence and of fellowship in his cross. Good Friday has been not an isolated day, but the climax of Lent's preparation. And Easter becomes not the mere rebound from the restraints of Lent, but the increased power to enter into the joy of its revelation.
- (b) The life of every Christian is to be the life of the risen Lord. Dead with him on the cross, buried with him in baptism, risen with him in newness of life, we too are in him ascending to the Father, and entering upon the glorious life. Victory, power, and fellowship are the conditions of a joy which is to be full (S. John xvi. 24).
- (c) And life may be a perpetual Easter: "Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (S. John xvi. 22). The only condition is that we abide with him. May the experience of the joylessness of life when we live apart from him draw us daily to dwell more closely with him, and in the power of his resurrection!

Isolation and Fellowship

SATURDAY IN EASTER WEEK

"But Thomas was not with them when Jesus came . . . and Thomas with them."
—S. John xx. 24-26.

Picture: S. Thomas in his isolation during his week of suspense.

Resolve: to make more use of the strength of Christian fellowship.

I.—S. Thomas in doubt.

- (a) The struggle with evidence. The problem of the Resurrection is not to be denied or evaded. S. Thomas acted rightly in refusing to allow hope to run away with him, and his reason to be cajoled. Without a good answer for the hope that is in us, we only expose ourselves to the shafts of doubt. To different minds, however, different answers appeal, but it is false to deny the supremacy of reason.
- (b) S. Thomas' error was in being withdrawn from his fellow-apostles in the hour of trial, when all clung together. He should have been with those who were like-minded with himself. He forgot the promise to fellowship: "Where two or three are gathered together in my Name." It is false to carry away one's melancholy doubt outside the Christian fellowship, and to nurse it in gloomy isolation.
- (c) In the early Church the personal witness of the apostles was the great evidence of the Resurrection. At a later age the living tradition handed down in the Church took its place (cf. 2 Tim. ii. 2). This was a common argument against the teaching of heretics. To this day the argument is valid, but we approach it differently, viz. the consciousness of the Christian Society as to the fundamental character of the fact.

II.—S. Thomas' struggle.

- (a) His was the disposition which peculiarly needed the support of fellowship. He was affectionate, true, and one who looked rather on the dark side. On hearing our Lord's words after the death of Lazarus he had said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." So too it was he who felt the difficulty of our Lord's words, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know" (S. John xiv. 4, 5).
- (b) It seems improbable that Thomas had not heard the reports of Easter Day. He kept away from the Ten because he could not share their hopes, yet would not damp them by his disbelief in them. We may be sure that he would not have isolated himself if the others could have been helped by his sympathy.
- (c) We may be thankful that among the Twelve place was found for one who had that character which, through a tendency to depression, has made some men rather martyrs to truth than loyal followers of it; a critical disposition, combined, perhaps, with a physical tendency to low spirits, and honesty to the degree of scrupulosity, fearing to believe just because there is a desperate longing to believe.

III.—The victory of faith.

- (a) He threw aside the narrowness of isolation, and boldly faced the believers' evidence. On the one hand, with great honesty he refused to believe simply because he wanted to believe (S. John xx. 25), and on the other hand he was not obstinate in a pride of disbelief, but next Sunday joined himself to the Ten (ver. 26).
- (b) In the victory of faith due regard must be had to the Christian fellowship of the Ten. They wished to share their joy with Thomas, who, they knew, loved him; nor did they cast him aside when he refused their testimony. As of old the bold challenge was, "Come and see": they welcomed him in their midst. "Charity hopeth all things."
- (c) The spiritual conditions were now fulfilled for the manifestation, mutual love, honesty, desire to believe, and fellowship with the believers. But it was Christ himself who gave the conviction; Thomas did not believe a belief, or hold an opinion, but Christ revealed himself to him, who after his Resurrection was only manifested to believers (Acts x. 41). Thomas' doubt he reckoned for belief. And the proof of his belief was worship (ver. 28).

The Easter Commission

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."—S. John xx. 21.

Picture: the scene of the Gospel.

Resolve: to depend more entirely upon the power which is from above.

I.—*His Resurrection power.*

- (a) Prior to his resurrection, he did not bestow the power of commission upon his disciples: only an anticipatory gift is to be traced in the short missions of the Twelve and the Seventy. But now all power is given unto him, to bestow it upon the members of his extended humanity. This is the fruit of the victory won by him in the region of his human nature.
- (b) Mark how changed is our humanity that now he can incorporate us into himself, making one new Man. And this change has been wrought by him: it is external to us as individuals, but only by union with him does it operate within each one of us. Make an act of thanksgiving for your baptism.
- (c) Do honour to his atoning death by entering more into his resurrection power. Appreciate more the power, and so you will be brought to deeper gratitude to him for all that he hath done. Some spend all their lifetime in seeking forgiveness, as if they could not believe that he is risen; others go through life burdened with cares, and weak in themselves, because they cannot grasp that he is able to do all things in them.

II.—*His commission.*

- (a) He was sent: he did not come of himself; nor did he do anything of himself. The very words he spake were what his Father gave him. Hence, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." But below this adequate representation of commission lay the oneness of nature which gives fulness to his commission.
- (b) As he is commissioned, even so he commissions his Church. The parallel is a startling declaration of the nature and character of the Church. His Body is to represent him entirely because of one nature with him in that humanity which he has taken up into himself and redeemed.
- (c) The principle of commission runs through the whole Church, in her ministry and sacraments. Vocation is the charging with a commission; its response is the taking up of a commission as such, an application of the words of this meditation. The life of every Christian should be bound in this spirit to his Lord and Master, waiting on his word in submission and readiness to receive his word. "I will not leave you." "Lo! I am with you always."

III.—*Some aspects of commission.*

- (a) Authority and power. The divine Head gives to his Church all authority and all power, to exercise them in his Name. To each individual whom he commissions to any duty in his service he grants in corresponding degree the authority and the power to execute his commission. There is nothing which my Master bids me do in his Name for which he does not at the same time give me ample power.
- (b) Agreeable to such commission is the responsibility of it. The powerlessness of many Christian lives is an affront to him who has sent us even as his Father sent him. He has provided for us so liberally that we may shew forth the glory of his Father. Rise in confidence to so great and loving condescension which deals with us even as his Father with him.
- (c) And there must be close correspondence and intimacy, for the commissioned agent must be ready to know his Master's will, and prompt to obey it. And not only so, but also he is to represent his Master. He is to be like him in all things, by the renewal of the mind, being dead and buried and risen with him.

The Importance of the Resurrection

FIRST MONDAY AFTER EASTER

"Rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."—1 Cor. xv. 4.

Picture: the Resurrection in silent majesty.

Pray: for the loyal devotion of Christians to this article of the Creed.

I.—*The nature of the necessity.*

- (a) Consider first a simple aspect; there was a Scripture necessity for the Resurrection. The Holy Writings did not bind him by way of impediment, but being as they are the Word of God, they prepared for that which had a further necessity. Scripture foretold, because in the eternal will of God the Resurrection was to be. Let faith be confirmed in Holy Scripture.
- (b) In harmony with the will of God thus unfolded, was his own life of teaching; thus to the necessity of Scripture must be added the necessity of his own words. Perfect harmony exists between the various ways in which the one Divine will is revealed. Recall to mind words of Jesus Christ which foretold his Resurrection: especially consider the revelation of the Transfiguration of his human body on the mount in relation to the unfolding of his Passion.
- (c) Relate these two elements round the truth that the Son can do nothing of himself, but that which he has learned of the Father. Behind Scripture, behind his foreshadowing words, lies the divine counsel. God so willed that in the Incarnate life his eternal Son should rise truly from the dead in the victory of human life.

II.—*The Divine will in relation to his Person.*

- (a) Jesus Christ died in the flesh. His death was human death, the separation of human soul and human body. So far as we can interpret that which the almighty will of God decrees, we may venture to ask ourselves whether he who died in the flesh, could do other than rise in the flesh, if the two whole and perfect natures were "never to be divided, whereof is one Christ" (Art. II.).
- (b) Jesus Christ rose again because his death had accomplished its work, and therefore death had no longer dominion over him. In Hades he was no prisoner; he ruled there in triumph. And because his death was victory, therefore there was more work for him to do and carry on in his sacred humanity, which must partake of the fruitful results of his death.
- (c) Jesus Christ rose again because he is the full revelation of man. His resurrection is not only the guarantee to us of our resurrection; it was essential to his perfect humanity, marking an advance in the humanity of his Person, whereby he became the archetype of perfected and consummated humanity. This is probably so apart from the problem of evil; but we are ignorant of such condition saving in the person of Christ, and even he who knew no sin became sin for us.

III.—*The Divine will in relation to his office.*

- (a) There was a necessity of carrying out his incarnate office. The work of Jesus Christ for the human race is not ended. He for ever sustains it as Man and Saviour in his incarnate unity is the bond of union in the redeemed human race. He rose for us as true as that he rose because he could not be holden by death. So he ever liveth for us, in his human nature upholding humanity in himself.
- (b) Consider this bodily resurrection in relation to him as Prophet, Priest and King. None of these offices was laid down at his death, upon the last he had not formally entered; each is indissolubly knit to his humanity. In each, if the Resurrection were not a bodily one, he has failed in the dignity and promise of his office. As the Prophet his revelation was not complete; as Priest his office was only being entered upon; as King he had not yet entered into his kingdom, when he was buried.
- (c) And in all these relationships the permanence of his humanity is the essential condition. The Prophet who reveals the way of humanity must be truly human; the Priest who ministers in the true tabernacle must be like unto his brethren; the King who rules in freedom must be akin to his subjects. So for us men he rose as man, and man is soul and body united.

The Living among the Dead?

FIRST TUESDAY AFTER EASTER

"Why seek ye the living among the dead?"—S. Luke xxiv.

Picture: the vision of angels at the empty tomb.

Resolve: reality of life.

I.—*The dead.*

- (a) Many seek for, because they only know, a dead Christ. They seek him in the memory of a past experience, in the phrases of past generations. But he himself is dead to them, an historical figure of the past, a word, a set of ideas, a charm, a superstition, a hear-say! Hence they cling tenaciously to the past, to something, may be, which was once living. They are afraid of the movement of life; they fear a living Christ in their lives.
- (b) If he lives, then I died, died with him, was buried in baptism, and rose to new life. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." He is not to be found in our dead selves and their powerlessness. Yet often the attempt is made to believe in Christ and to live by the power of self: whereas either Christ is dead in us, or self is being put to death by the vital reigning power of Christ, dominant and not brooking rival.
- (c) Mary wept at the grave, having come to embalm a dead Christ, as many weep over the past of their lives, their sins and their sorrows, waiting still for the voice to say that he is not here, that he goeth before (S. Mark xvi. 7). Their Gospel ends at the Crucifixion: its sum is "Christ died for me."

II.—*The living.*

- (a) To know the living Jesus is Easter indeed; in living fellowship of speech and power. This is the first great conviction of the spiritual life, whether it has advanced from earliest years, so that we have never known him otherwise, or whether it has come as an experience later in life.
- (b) Consider the application of these words to the vitality of the Sacraments. They are himself in "another form." No mere ceremonies, hallowed as they may be by associations. Thank God that such is his living power, that the efficacy of his grace-given communication is not prevented by those who can only ascribe the value of a symbolic form to which they owe obedience, where we know that Jesus himself draws near.
- (c) Wherever there is life there is movement and development. No Christian can stand still. To believe in Jesus as the Living One is to hold the conviction of progress. And further it is to hope all things, to believe all things. It is also to look for him in every manifestation of life, and to seek to unfold his revelation to each generation.

III.—*Why seek the living among the dead?*

- (a) He is to be sought—and among the living. Many seek for him in the place of the dead, in empty forms, making his presence into a dead place by their unreality, as in the impenitent confession, the communion not made in right disposition, in good deeds done without faith, in public worship treated as a musical gratification.
- (b) Nor is he to be found in the shallows and trivialities of life, in easy prayer and easy conduct. Nor in the deadness of divided will or wavering purpose, of self-seeking or of feeble effort. If the Easter lesson is life and energy, it is none the less life with the stern reality of Good Friday behind it. He is not to be found in pleasant good intention, which has in it no Good Friday of a penitent heart.
- (c) The disappointments of that Easter morn provide a great lesson to the Christian who is struggling to realize his life. The disappointment came from not realizing that he was alive. The latter joy and revelation from seeking him in obedience and with the persistence of those who had shared the earlier revelation. They never sought him among lifeless things and forms, while pretending to know that he was alive.

The Evidence for the Resurrection

FIRST WEDNESDAY AFTER EASTER

"This Jesus hath God raised up."—Acts ii. 32.

Picture: the Jesus of the Gospel narratives alive for evermore.

Resolve: to realize the presence of this Jesus.

I.—*The historical evidence for the Resurrection.*

- (a) It was not part of the Messianic hope. Various strands of Messianic belief among the Jews, but not consistently woven together; and God become man, rising from the dead in victorious manhood, was not the substance of Jewish Messiahship. Hence the disciples had no tendency through their Judaism towards imagining the Resurrection as a result of their belief in Jesus that he was the true Messiah.
- (b) And the disciples had lost their faith on Good Friday, and were difficult of persuasion on Easter Day. They did not accept even the well-supported testimony of their friends. They had hoped—but scarcely knew what they had hoped; they had expected him to unveil further revelation to them. But they did not hope for this, and they were not assisted to receive it by any previous conviction that it must happen.
- (c) But when satisfied they preached his resurrection boldly, in Jerusalem, where it could best be contradicted. And they preached it in spite of the weak spot in their evidence that he was not seen by unbelievers (Acts x. 41). They had the evidence of the empty tomb, and the bribery theory would not stand investigation, for it was not true (S. Matt. xxviii. 11-15).

II.—*The Christian necessity of the fact.*

- (a) But when through the fact of the Resurrection, which itself is the revelation, Jesus is allowed to be his own interpreter, one sees that it must be even as it was, because he is God. In the apostolic age the Resurrection was the proof that he was appointed by God; but now we base our conviction of the Resurrection upon himself, his teaching, his universality, his power over the human heart. And because we believe in him, the Resurrection is a necessity. God could not be holden of death.
- (b) It is a moral necessity for the assurance of the forgiveness of sins. It is the divine attestation to the perfect oblation that he should come back from the grave bringing in himself life and immortality as the fruit of his Passion.
- (c) Our resurrection is a demand of the human heart; and his rising again meets it. He the Very Man, rising in his human nature, is the first-fruits from the dead. For his full experience of humanity, his resurrection was as essential as his birth and life-experience and death.

III.—*The same Jesus lives.*

- (a) Apply the evangelical records. Our eyes are holden that we cannot see, and yet he is none other in character and sympathy than in the days of old, and we may still walk with him by the way, and talk with him as did the disciples. We should read the Gospels devotionally, placing ourselves in the position of the disciples, and conversing with Jesus.
- (b) One great lesson of the forty days was to teach his disciples this lesson, that he was with them even though unseen. It was a preparation for the universally unseen presence. Thank God that he is teaching us this lesson, and pray to realize it more fully, especially in sacramental communion, and as a fruit of it.
- (c) The risen Lord is pre-eminently the forgiving Lord. No word of reproach crossed his lips. His first appearance was to Mary Magdalene. His first message was to S. Peter. His last act was blessing (S. Luke xxiv. 50). Realize him in sacramental forgiveness as being present as if you were standing beneath his cross, which, indeed, you are doing at that time.

The Resurrection Life

FIRST THURSDAY AFTER EASTER

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above."—Col. iii, 1.

Picture: the risen Master lingering on earth for the sake of his people, as describing to us the life we are to live in him.

Resolve: to live more closely in union with him.

I.—*Separateness from the world and consecration to God.*

- (a) Henceforth his life on earth was not an earthly life, dependent as heretofore on the material. To the material which would hold him down he says, "Touch me not." So the Christian should ever say to the old Adam, and to Satan and the world, and saying it in union with his risen life will find it true.
- (b) He comes and goes. So, too, the Christian is not always before the eyes of men, and when not seen he is somewhere or other with the Father, developing his risen life of "I ascend." Even when seen there is something about him which clearly says that he is not of this world.
- (c) Therefore S. Paul says, "Seek." With Jesus it was natural; with the Christian it is a sustained effort. But we lose the power and the will to seek if we do not realize by application that as members of his risen life we share with him the powers of that life, which yet lingered on earth for us, while already he was ascending to the right hand of God.

II.—*A life of power.*

- (a) It was by the Resurrection that he was declared to be the Son of God with power (Rom. i. 4). Having in his human nature obtained the victory, he is no longer limited by the restraints of human life to which he had submitted himself. He has entered for us upon his victorious career of life-giving spirit.
- (b) And such is his revelation to us. "Raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25). So S. Paul prays that "I may know him and the power of his Resurrection" (Phil. iii. 10): the power is the gift of life and all that is involved in it. All power is given him in heaven and earth, and is conveyed normally through the Sacraments. Baptism is the resurrection after burial of the dead self; the Eucharist is the sustenance of the new principle of life.
- (c) "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13), for the Christian is united to his risen life. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." In any temptation or difficulty the Christian may take his stand confidently as victorious in union with him: even his own final victory is assured *in him*.

III.—*A life of freedom.*

- (a) "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," is referred by the apostle to the Resurrection (Acts xiii. 33). Before his death, although Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; but now he is declared to be the Son of God with power: on his resurrection he entered for us into the freedom of Sonship, as inheritor, both for himself and the children which God hath given him (see Heb. ii. 9-13).
- (b) Enter into the inheritance of this freedom of sons, in the liberty of a cleansed will and in the spirit of adoption, freed from sin and no longer brought under bondage to anything. We must be mentally free in him by a mind above the restraints of material life, intellectually free by a vision extended to embrace two worlds, of which the new sphere is the true; physically free, because the world cannot harm, it can but hasten our nearer approach to him.
- (c) The freedom of fellowship, communicated through sonship with him who sitteth above the water-floods. In this way we may see the appearances of our Lord after his resurrection. To the holy women, as a revelation of love to comfort and enlighten; to S. Thomas and S. Peter, to restore and confirm; and to all, to teach that though invisible to sight yet he is ever present, and that, though risen, he preserves his human love and sympathy.

The Resurrection of the Body

FIRST FRIDAY AFTER EASTER

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept."—1 Cor. xv. 20.

Picture: the disciples realizing that Jesus Christ was truly alive again.

Resolve: to make acts of faith in Jesus Christ, who rose again from the dead.

I.—*Human resurrection.*

- (a) The Jews very slowly came to believe in resurrection; at the time of Christ it was disputed between the Pharisees and Sadducees. And the belief was not so clear as ours is. Did it retain individual personality? Did it include a resurrection of the body? This uncertainty excludes the suggestion that Christ only rose in the heated fancy of his disciples, who believed in his Messiahship.
- (b) The early Christians argued from the other side. We know that Christ is risen; therefore our resurrection must be true. Yet some Christians in Corinth were saying that a resurrection of the dead was unthinkable (1 Cor. xv. 12-14). St. Paul declares that they were failing here to grasp Christianity; for if men cannot rise, then Jesus Christ is not risen, for it was the Man who died.
- (c) But if Christ is not risen, fatal consequences follow. The whole Gospel, and with it our Christian faith, are without basis (1 Cor. xv. 14, "vain"), for the Resurrection alone is the divine testimony to the efficacy of his death. And it follows that if we believe in a Christ whose human nature has been left in the grave, our faith is fruitless of result (ver. 17, "vain," but the Greek word is different); for mere believing will not take away sins.

II.—*Theological considerations.*

- (a) In the mediatorial work of Christ we can never dissociate him from his human nature (see Rom. iv. 25). A resurrection of his divine nature is an absurdity in thought; nor does it touch the problem of human life and sin. So, too, the truth for us of his Ascension is the truth of his Ascension in human nature.
- (b) An analogy between the two Adams. In both cases the race receives its character "through a man," *i.e.* through human experience (1 Cor. xv. 21). The problem raised of death through sin does not touch the physicist's difficulty, because we have no experience of human life without sin except in him who gave his life for us; and because we have not to consider the natural property of the material human frame to continue in perpetual existence, but the will of God, apart from sin, to have transformed the development of human life through that stage which is known to us as death, so as to have made it a development to which our word "death" would not be in the least applicable (1 Cor. xv. 51 ff.).
- (c) Christ is the Man; what he experienced as Man is universal. But further, in Christ is a new race: Adam gave a physical birth; Christ a spiritual. In Christ, therefore, is the true resurrection, of a heavenly character, to those who are in fellowship with him.

III.—*The resurrection of the body.*

- (a) The body belongs to one's true personality; it is not essentially material; the material atoms are part of the present condition (see 1 Cor. vi. 13, 14; cf. xv. 50). There is great comfort here for those who are suffering from physical defect or weakness.
- (b) We are redeemed body and soul (1 Cor. vi. 20); Christ died body and soul; his body was buried, and his soul went to Hades. Body and soul, my whole personality, is therefore to glorify God, and to share in the Resurrection.
- (c) St. Paul realized that the Corinthians would at any rate in course of time, if they did not grasp this truth of personality, be led into despising the body as not sharing in the true Christian life, and so be led into excusing immorality as merely bodily. Yet no illustration more helps this difficulty of thought; for the essence of impurity is that it degrades *me*, and not that it may be bad for my health.

The Manner of the Resurrection

FIRST SATURDAY AFTER EASTER

"How are the dead raised up?"—1 Cor. xv. 35.

Picture: one of the appearances of Jesus Christ after his resurrection.

Resolve: act of faith in the resurrection of the body.

I.—*Difficulty as to the manner of our resurrection.*

- (a) It was one of the earliest problems of Christianity. The Thessalonians, regarding the coming of our Lord too materially, were distressed that those who died now would be deprived of a share in his kingdom which he was about to establish. In reply S. Paul largely anticipated his teaching to the Corinthians (1 Thess. iv. 14 ff.).
- (b) Reason and experience lead us to suppose that the resurrection-body will be very different from a mere revival. The Christian revelation teaches us to look for an advanced state of development at our resurrection, for which the material accidents of our body are unsuitable. Experience has made us familiar with startling changes of form as being consistent with continuity of life. The analogy of the plant sprung from the seed is valid against the timorous question, "*How?*"
- (c) S. Paul was not able to explain the resurrection-body, but he called it a celestial or heavenly body (1 Cor. xv. 40), a title never given in the New Testament to any part of the material creation. The analogy of angels does not help, because our only knowledge of them is confined to the form under which they have appeared to men.

II.—*The Resurrection of Christ our evidence.*

- (a) It has not pleased Almighty God to reveal to us the form of our body in the future state. He is not wont to reveal more of the future than suffices for our spiritual advance. To the Jews he did not reveal the issues of Judaism in Christianity; and so to us he has only made known that which should guide us into true reverence of the body as part of ourselves and as only material in its present form.
- (b) But the person of Jesus Christ, seen by witnesses during forty days, helps our ignorance. His body had disappeared from the tomb, which assures us that it is not a merely temporary veil of his spiritual being. But that he was seen, when he willed to be seen, as of bodily form, does not give us any evidence for the form of our resurrection-body: the form was rather a necessary condescension to his disciples, that they might identify him and be encouraged to close fellowship with him.
- (c) But he did not manifest himself in the body materially. He passed through doors. He appeared and disappeared, and was not limited by space. Gradually he was revealing, as his followers could receive, characteristics of the future state, and was thereby preparing them for his presence realized in fellowship when he was finally withdrawn from sight.

III.—*Contrast between the present and future state of the body.*

- (a) The material body is born ("*sown*," 1 Cor. xv. 42) in dishonour, that is, weak and subject to the limitations and conditions of matter. As part of ourselves it is an inheritor with us of the evil which has entered into man. It is a natural body (1 Cor. xv. 44) governed by the natural rational life.
- (b) The resurrection state is spiritual (1 Cor. xv. 44), and therefore characterized by incorruption and power. The Christian has already entered upon this state, but his body lags behind until it has paid the penalty of death (1 Cor. xv. 26; Rom. viii. 23).
- (c) The order from natural to spiritual is the reasonable order of development, and follows from the relation of each to its prototype, Adam and Christ (1 Cor. xv. 45). Adam taken from dust cannot lead his offspring by natural progress to the goal prepared for those who are in the image of God: Christ, the eternal Spirit, leads his sons by spiritual regeneration into the full prerogatives of immortality.

The Shepherd of the Sheep

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

"That the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd."—
See Numb. xxvii. 16, 17.

Picture: the Good Shepherd.

Resolve: to pay more attention to my value in his sight.

I.—*Possession.*

- (a) The measure of our hope is not in our power to persevere, but in his possession of us. The hireling is described as one "whose own the sheep are not." As his, he will take care of his own purchased possession. Dwell much on the preciousness of this truth, especially when oppressed by a sense of unworthiness.
- (b) We are his in manifold ways. In the Incarnation he was made like unto his brethren. Doubly his through laying down his life: "The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." His now through baptism, manifold gifts of grace, and through many wanderings from which he has brought us back.
- (c) All these considerations are an abundant guarantee of the divine forbearance. In two ways: (a) the risen Lord is one whose character is that he is one who has laid down his life for the sheep; he has come through death to life the same Good Shepherd as before." (b) Such as the Son is, such is the Father.

II.—*Knowledge.*

- (a) "I know my sheep, and am known of mine." It is a knowledge which is intimate as the shepherd's knowledge is of the idiosyncrasy of each sheep. A knowledge which does not alienate, but inspires confidence, so that the sheep also know him, and know where they will be well cared for. They have made experience of the shepherd's understanding knowledge of them.
- (b) A knowledge which is mystical: "I know mine own, and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father" (R.V.). While the words give the highest expression to the intimacy of the natural knowledge, they also go deeper. The knowledge is described by its character. As the Father and Son know each other in the unity of nature, so he became man that he might know us, and he has made us partakers of his nature, in which we may know him.
- (c) The knowledge of his sheep is also personal. Lest we be perplexed at so deep a mystery as we have marked, consider now how "his own sheep he calleth by name"; each one personally known to him, and individually spoken to and addressed. Mark the Shepherd's confidence in his sheep: "they hear his voice," welcoming it; and "they follow me" (S. John x. 3, 27).

III.—*Devotion.*

- (a) "I lay down my life for the sheep." It is a wonderful mark of devotion, but it is not easy to see how in the shepherd it can be of benefit to the sheep. Here the Great Shepherd, as throughout the allegory, surpasses the illustration. There the shepherd who is willing to lay down his life for his own sheep is the best type of protector: here not only is devotion prominent, but even fruitfulness in the act of laying down his life; and he is presented now as one who has done this.
- (b) Such an one gives confidence: He will ever meet the emergency by his devotion, as he goes out and comes in before them, so that they may never feel like sheep which have no shepherd. The parable of the lost sheep is an illustration of one aspect of such devotion. Consider carefully what response of confidence has been established.
- (c) Possession gives identity of interest: "I am his, and he is mine." And is the measure of devotion: "They shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand," for the Father hath given them to me (ver. 29). Now we have reached the deepest ground; his devotion to us is secured upon his devotion to his Father.

The Shepherd and the Sheep

SECOND MONDAY AFTER EASTER

"I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."—S. John x. 11.

Picture: an Eastern shepherd protecting and feeding his sheep on the hills.

Resolve: to think more of the devotion of the Good Shepherd to his sheep as manifested day by day.

I.—Consider some Old Testament illustrations.

- (a) Patriarch: the Bible has a long history of shepherds, beginning with Abel, and inaugurating Jewish history in Abraham. The devotional use of the shepherd is familiar with the words of Jacob: "I will lead on softly according as the cattle that goeth before me . . . be able to endure" (Gen. xxxiii. 13, 14). Even the mean Jacob becomes momentarily sublime, if we can forget that it was a selfish excuse. But the words are to us a reminder of the Shepherd who knoweth whereof we are made, who remembereth that we are but dust (Ps. ciii. 14).
- (b) Psalmist: here definitely the devotional mind has applied the shepherding to his appreciation of the divine care. Ps. xxiii. is a marvel to us when we reflect that the author was not a Christian. We may confidently say that he was a shepherd: consider, then, how the devout mind is led into the depths of spiritual understanding through the parables of daily life. And the psalmists have likewise realized our likeness to the sheep (last verse of Ps. cxix.).
- (c) Prophet: in the prophets there is full use both of shepherd and sheep, and widely applied. "We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep" is a familiar thought; but the discipline of history has impressed on them the truth of the flock: the scattered sheep must be gathered together by the Davidic king, who is to be their one shepherd (Ezek. xxxiv. 23).

II.—Consider some Gospel illustrations.

- (a) The parable of the lost sheep. The intensity of the shepherd's devotion, which the conduct of the sheep cannot exhaust (S. Luke xv. 4 ff.): it is based on the substantial consideration of possession; he is not a hireling "whose own the sheep are not," but he has purchased his flock with a great price.
- (b) "As sheep in the midst of wolves" (S. Matt. x. 16). The Good Shepherd sends out his little flock to be like sheep in the midst of the world's wolves. This simile adds a third element to the character of the sheep: they tend to stray; they are formed into a flock; and now they are ridiculously weak and surrounded by fierce enemies. But "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (S. Luke xii. 32).
- (c) "As a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (S. Matt. xxv. 32). The intimate knowledge of the Good Shepherd is manifested in his power to distinguish between true and false where there is a great superficial resemblance. His integrity is seen in that he will have none but his own; no counterfeit is accepted.

III.—The shepherd and his flock.

- (a) A flock with such a shepherd must in some way share his character: devotion produces confidence, security, and brotherhood. Knowledge which is commensurate with such devotion does not cause a fear that patience will be exhausted: he who lays down his life for the sheep testifies that his devotion is inexhaustible.
- (b) They "follow his steps," as the Good Shepherd goes before. Once they wandered, before they knew him well: now they trust, and no longer bring him "o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent": they have returned to the Shepherd of their souls. They know who finds out the still waters and the green pastures, and they do not fear the howling wolves, that dread sound to the hireling; but they hear the Shepherd's voice and are at ease. "I shall not want."
- (c) And they take their character from him. A sense of the brotherhood of the flock is produced by the experience that he loves each alike, and each with a whole and undivided attention. Is it not he who laid down his life for the sheep, and by so doing has collected his scattered sheep into the flock over which he rules?

Resurrection and Redemption

SECOND TUESDAY AFTER EASTER

"And he shall redeem Israel from all his sins."—Ps. cxxx. 8.

Picture: the Risen Christ bringing with him new life.

Pray: to place no limit upon the work of God's grace.

I.—*Resurrection and the new life.*

- (a) A good Lent leads to a joyous Easter. The message of the psalmist is an Easter greeting—redemption from all our sin. The truth associated with Easter is the great fruit of the Passion: "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Forgiveness has passed into life, for life is fellowship with God.
- (b) "The cross then did not at once justify us. . . . What he purchased for us by his death, he giveth us through his life. It is our living Lord, who imparts to us the fruits of his own death." "In the Resurrection the body which was slain for us became life-giving" (Pusey).
- (c) In so far as we follow the psalmist in his lessons of penitence, we shall learn to rejoice in Easter, not because it is the end of Lent's restraint, but because it is the memorial of the life of fellowship; for consider that all the lessons of trust, waiting upon God, hoping in him, longing for him, are fruits of the life of fellowship in the risen Christ, the first-fruit of which was forgiveness.

II.—*Resurrection and redemption.*

- (a) "He was raised again for our justification." Formal justification is conveyed in the forgiveness of sins, the earnest of our redemption. But the final justification is the redemption from all sins. The psalm has traced the life of justification from its first stages (ver. 4) through the life of grace (5-7) up to the end (ver. 8).
- (b) Herein is to be seen (5-7) the *power* of the Gospel (1 Cor. i. 24). The richest practical fruit which we can hope to gain from this pursuit of penitence is the fuller appreciation of this power, as it draws us into closer fellowship with him, and so makes his life to grow in us. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection."
- (c) And (ver. 8) the *wisdom* of the Gospel (1 Cor. i. 24). "Wisdom is justified of her works." This is the end of the life of justification, which harmonizes experienced facts with the mystery of our present state of justification before him in fellowship with the life of the risen Christ which is surely working within us. When God's Israel is redeemed from all his sins, then shall he be seen to be "just to forgive us our sins."

III.—*The redemption of Israel.*

- (a) Think of the spiritual height to which the psalmist has travelled along the ascending road of penitence. From out of the deep he has scaled to the redemption from all sins as the privilege of God's Israel. And this without the light of the Incarnation. Take courage boldly to face the future, and to stretch forward to it in the present use of grace and fellowship.
- (b) In the light of Easter joy boldly fling away the thought of sins as the perpetual mourning of Christian life. Christ, our new Life, is risen. In his power I may break off sin. Apply the Lenten lessons of penitence to know him and the power of his resurrection rather than to be habitually in the depth of thine own weakness. Sin shall no more have dominion over me.
- (c) It is in learning this truth of the new life that the psalmist has learned the mercy of God, and to trust in him. Forgiveness has proved the foundation of a noble superstructure of grace. As thought has passed beyond himself to God's Israel, he has learned a new devotion to the Church of God. "He shall redeem Israel." In the life of Sacrament, worship and fellowship, he is apprehending the working out of divine purposes, just so far as he throws himself into the life of the Church for which Christ died.

Jesus Christ our Life Here and Hereafter

SECOND WEDNESDAY AFTER EASTER

"I am the resurrection and the life."—S. John xi. 25.

Picture: Jesus Christ at the grave of Lazarus.

Resolve: to consider my life and hereafter.

I.—*Consider his words.*

- (a) In the raising of Lazarus he foretold his own resurrection. That on Good Friday the disciples did not remember this should be no more surprising to us than is our own habitual inability to perceive the full consequences of his words, or to remember what he has said. Continually we fail to embrace his words of promise just when we most need them.
- (b) They involve our own resurrection. Lazarus was not an isolated case, although the circumstances of his rising were exceptional. Jesus Christ came to redeem humanity, and the individual guarantees the universal. The miracles of Christ are revelations, and not merely acts. Yet in form the resurrection of Lazarus is particular. He rose to the renewal of his former life, and to die again. We rise to new life, never more to die.
- (c) The words throw light upon this difference, by directing us to his own resurrection, which was only dimly foreshadowed by the raising of Lazarus. Until he died and rose again there could not be more than hints of the truth, for it is through his death that death is vanquished. So here he says that he is the resurrection because he is the life—of the individual believer.

II.—*The continuity of resurrection and life.*

- (a) Life here and hereafter is one. What we begin to live in him now, we live also in him, but in a more developed manner, in that expansion of life which commences with the experience of the death of this present form of life. Strive so to live as to be acquiring a desire for the fuller life.
- (b) Fix the mind more upon the larger life. It would revolutionize our life to consider that we have already begun our risen life. Thus the first effect of Christianity on slavery was not to abolish it, but so to raise the mind of the slave that he rose above caring for it. He had consciously entered upon the larger life.
- (c) Consider the duty of praying for the faithful departed. They and we are one family of God in the new life. We are not cut off from them by death, but we are closer to them. And let this thought be a Christian verity, of which the non-Christian sentimentalism, that strains after false fellowship with the departed, is a parody. See to it that all is in Christ.

III.—*Jesus Christ here and hereafter our life.*

- (a) To hold on to Christ is the securing the prize. If Christ be the head of the body, the bond which unites the saints, he is also the life of each individually—of each Lazarus, whether bound with grave-clothes or tied with the bonds of flesh and the cords of Satan.
- (b) Two deaths there must be; but the eternal death may be replaced by the death unto sin in the power of fellowship in his risen life. He is the resurrection because he is the life, and he is also for us the resurrection and the life hereafter, because he is even now the life which gives resurrection from the death of sin to newness of life.
- (c) This new life is ever developing, renewing itself, the old falling off as the new grows. Life knows no stagnation. Is the life growing? One may not look every day for signs of growth, but as the years go by one should see the proof of life in deeper faith, in strength of conduct, in growth of charity, in power of prayer.

The Forty Days

SECOND THURSDAY AFTER EASTER

“*Being seen of them forty days.*”—Acts i. 3.

Consider : Jesus Christ lingering for forty days on the earth.

Resolve : to look for Jesus during the day in prayer and acts.

I.—*Forty days.*

- (a) Not only was there the great change : he was dead and is alive for evermore ; and to know this was the spiritual revelation of Easter Day. But a further revelation took place when he began to appear to them without preparatory sign of his coming. It was a preparation for withdrawal from sight, a gracious condescension to human limitations, not demanding too much of man. He was dealing with them as a father with his children.
- (b) It taught them, and us through them, the abiding *here* and *now* of Jesus Christ ; he only had to manifest himself, whether in Jerusalem, or Judæa, or Galilee, whether on the road or in the room, whether in company or alone. It was the preparation for ever-presentness, wherever they might be.
- (c) We say, “ If Jesus Christ should come,” when we should think, “ If Jesus Christ were now to remove the hiddenness of his presence.” We have learnt one lesson of the forty days partially, the ascension of the crucified and risen humanity of Jesus into heaven in glory. We have absorbed far less of the other lesson, that he is with us all the days, never less absent from us than now in his glorified humanity.

II.—*His lingering on earth.*

- (a) His lingering on earth, while already his human nature had entered upon the Resurrection-life, had in it a tender consideration for the limitations of his disciples. He was concerned about their development, and lingered until he had impressed upon them the new cycle of revealed truth.
- (b) Consider, too, the extension of his human experience after the Resurrection. He who loved Lazarus and his sisters and his disciples with a special love, was thus making clear that he had not lost his human feelings, and that love passes beyond death. Much as he loved the world of mankind, yet now he was to be seen by it no longer, to enter into human converse with it no more. But to his friends he still manifested himself and communed with them.
- (c) And this intimacy, like theirs with him at this time with the awe and reverence which did not break friendship, is ours with him to-day if we will value it, claim it, use it. It is ours because he is the true Mediator between God and man, himself man. It is ours pre-eminently in the friendship which one enjoys in the blessed Sacrament, wherein, as in the forty days, he converses with his friends but has passed out of the realm of converse with the world.

III.—*His present discipline of lingering.*

- (a) Consider again, in relation to our present life, this human lingering of Jesus near us, hungering after us, watching over us tenderly. Just out of sight, and only just out of sight—but very near by—waiting to be responded to by the heart open to the need of him for fellowship and guidance. Learn to avoid spiritual hurry and impatience ; wait till he manifests himself.
- (b) Consider, too, how he lingers about the holy places where his people should seek him. We know it in the atmosphere of calm and holiness which pervades a church. Especially he lingers by the altar, where his people have received him. Love to pray in church, and to turn the heart to the altar, renewing in fellowship the sacramental gift of himself. And remember that the verity of his true sacramental presence is the extension of his unseen presence in his Church.
- (c) Consider, too, how he lingers about many an action and intention, seeking to reveal himself in it, if we will. Waiting to say, “ Ye have done it unto me.”

The Joy of the Risen Lord

SECOND FRIDAY AFTER EASTER

"Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,"—Heb. xii. 2.

Consider : the joy of the risen Lord.

Pray : to be filled with his joy.

I.—*Jesus and Lazarus.*

- (a) We have often thought of the Resurrection as it affects self, as it affected the disciples, its influence on the early Church, and so on ; but perhaps not of how the risen Jesus was himself moved. Joy was characteristic of the effect of the Resurrection upon others : it was also characteristic of the risen life of Jesus Christ himself.
- (b) The case of Lazarus has often attracted attention. It has been thought that Lazarus came back to earth's life as a being of another world, moving silently and somewhat as a stranger. Yet was it perhaps that Jesus, who did all things perfectly, removed from him the memory and experience of those days and restored to him the continuity of his former life ?
- (c) No hint is ever given that Lazarus was glad or otherwise at his restored life, realized as restoration by the removal of the grave-clothes after life was renewed. And although the miracle was very public, yet nothing has escaped of what he said to Jesus, or to his family, or to Christians. So too with our Lord, nothing has been revealed by him of the mysteries of the other side, no sign of joy has been recorded. Doubtless it is himself who is the revelation, and beyond that no words can teach, only the experience.

II.—*The joy of his Resurrection.*

- (a) Joy in the victory of the atoning death realized in his human nature in the experience of the under-world. He was there as Saviour, experiencing the first stages of the joy that was set before him. And to his human nature it was a stupendous experience of human life apart from the body, an experience too exalted for expression in any human manifestation of joy.
- (b) Joy, too, in his human nature in the return to human fellowship with those whom he loved, but a joy touched with a great responsibility. The three days' departure was prelude to a longer departure, and the old fellowship could not be renewed without misunderstanding by the disciples.
- (c) Joy, too, in the nearer approach of the full joy that was set before him, the joy on which he entered at his ascension. We can only reflect, and reverently refrain from making a parallel with what we might suppose would be our own experience. For who shall say how far in the perfection of his human nature he had been sustained throughout by the joy of certain victory ?

III.—*The silence of the risen Lord.*

- (a) A deeper reverence than at any other time must guard our thoughts of him in these forty days. However ignorant we are, however imperfect through failure, we do know something of human nature, because it is our own nature ; and that which is inherent in human nature we are assured may be asserted of him who took human nature to himself. But of human nature which has passed through death, and is already gradually attaining to the spiritual body, we have no knowledge through experience.
- (b) But joy is a condition of true human nature, for it persists even in spite of sin, and the limitation of our experience ; and it has been asserted of his glorified life. And the aspects of joy which have been noted are essential elements of his glorified humanity—the joy of the Saviour, the joy of human fellowship, and the joy of perfected humanity.
- (c) He had already promised to fill his disciples with his joy (S. John xvii. 13), but the joy must be experienced in fellowship with him, and cannot be taught by word of mouth. Pentecost must begin to unfold it, for the forty days check the limited experience of the disciples' joy with a solemn reserve of intercourse. The joy of fellowship must be the fruit of union with the Saviour in his ascended life.

The Resurrection and the Creed

SECOND SATURDAY AFTER EASTER

"His Son . . . whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus."—1 Thess. i. 10.

Picture: the return of the risen Lord.

Pray: for the gift of faith to England.

I.—*The Resurrection and the Second Advent.*

- (a) The Apostolic Church believed in the return of our Lord from heaven, and expected it shortly. S. Paul shared this expectation, which had its roots in contemporary Jewish thought and the teaching of Jesus. Christians regarded themselves as waiting until his return for the true life of the Church.
- (b) Jewish Messianic teaching had no place for the death and resurrection of Jesus; but Christians unhesitatingly linked their belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus with their conceptions of his coming again. To them Jesus was first of all man; his resurrection was the convincing proof that he was also Son of God. And they did not doubt that he would return, as he had been seen and known.
- (c) So S. Paul here connects the cycle of Christian hope (ver. 10). And it is chiefly as the Risen One that he regards him; and not merely because he had thus seen the Lord, but because his death is to him the fundamental fact of redemption, and his resurrection the attestation of it.

II.—*The creed of the earliest Christians.*

- (a) This letter takes us into the inner life and beliefs of the first days. Its teaching is that which the Christians were receiving within twenty years of the Crucifixion. Evidently its value is very great; it testifies to the identity of Jesus with the Son of God, and to the belief which is expressed in the terms "death" and "resurrection" and "the coming again" (see also vers. 9, 10). And at the time of writing this letter from Corinth this creed was not new: S. Paul had received it (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4).
- (b) But in this letter the evidence to the primitiveness of the creed of Christians is the more emphatic because it is referred to so incidentally, and because there is nothing in the letter of a theology which can be called peculiarly Pauline. The references are not controversial. But elsewhere he has dwelt upon the theological exposition. The Resurrection is the basis of life (Rom. vi. 10 f.; 1 Cor. xv. 1 ff. 12-22; Phil. iii. 10 f.; Col. ii. 12, etc.).
- (c) It is important to realize this risen life as essential to the hope of Christians. A sentimental Christianity, which knows not its power, delights to dwell upon the death of Jesus: and it can regard his resurrection as a speculative dogma, not worth contending for, and to be relegated to the rank of pious opinion.

III.—*The safeguards of dogma.*

- (a) The early Church also had its difficulty of belief. S. Paul was called upon to defend the Resurrection not merely to unbelievers, Jew or Gentile (Acts xxiii. 6; xxvi. 8-23), but also to Christians (1 Cor. xv.). Nor was the difficulty very different from that which oppresses men's minds to-day. Man craved for immortality; but resurrection was unthinkable.
- (b) One safeguard to the Christian is belief in Christ. He does not believe in him to-day because he rose from the dead, for to the modern mind the existing historical evidence of the Resurrection is not regarded by itself as convincing; but he believes in the Resurrection because he believes in Christ, alive, and still man. It is the convincing evidence of his power manifested in the human heart.
- (c) And the Blessed Sacrament is the other safeguard of faith. It is the extension of the Incarnation; the life of the Incarnate God, Word made flesh, is still with us. This would not be if he were no longer Word become flesh, if by death he had severed his union with flesh. And to feed upon the Word made flesh is the surest guarantee of preserving the faith of our fathers.

Joy out of Sorrow

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

"Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."—S. John xvi. 20.

Picture: our Lord illustrates from child-birth (ver. 21). We may picture other examples of sorrow being turned into joy: e.g. a successful operation; godly repentance; the successful struggle against temptation.

Resolve: to place greater reliance in our Lord's promises.

I.—*Immediate application—the sorrow of hopelessness.*

- (a) The sorrow of his going away in crucifixion. Should we miss him so much? Sorrow blinded their hearts so that they forgot his promises. Do not we do the same in depression, in temptation?
- (b) The joy of the Resurrection—the revelation of victory. It was a return to the Father of human nature reconciled in the atoning death. The abiding joy of the Resurrection arises out of the sorrow of the crucifixion.
- (c) Answers to the need of the sinner. Alienated from God by sin, his death and resurrection bring joy out of sorrow. Study to enter more closely into this life-giving mystery, that by deeper sorrow for sin we may experience the joy which no man taketh from us.

II.—*Prospective application—the sorrow of loneliness.*

- (a) The sorrow of the ten days after the Ascension. He had indeed gone from them now to the Father: no longer could they expect his appearances. The former hopelessness could not return, but the joy of the forty days was abated. They were sustained by the promise for the fulfilment of which they were waiting in Jerusalem.
- (b) The joy of Pentecost—the revelation of grace. It was a return to the Father in mediatorial work, that he might send them the Holy Ghost. Once again it was the sorrow which was turned into joy. "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you."
- (c) Answers to the life of the Christian. The loneliness of being left here, while he is on the throne, is met by the sustaining gift of his abiding presence through the Holy Spirit: "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you." Realize the promise of his presence: "I am with you always (all the days), even unto the end of the world."

"I shall not fear the battle
If thou art by my side."

III.—*Remote application—the sorrow of strife.*

- (a) The sorrow of the Church awaiting his return. The individual experiences this in the struggle of a Christian life: the Church in the conflict with the world. Neither the individual nor the Church is yet triumphant: both have the pledge of triumph in him who has overcome the world: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."
- (b) The joy of the second coming—the revelation of the unveiled glory. It is the return to the Father from the consummated purposes of the Incarnation (1 Cor. xv. 24-28), that God may be all in all. Here there is no sorrow. With sin and death sorrow has been swallowed up.
- (c) Answers to the life of heaven. The Church triumphant. It is a note of the Church that in her struggle she anticipates the future and strikes even now the chord of triumph. The individual, sustained by the promises of God, has joy now which no man taketh from him. In strife he clings to the promise that no one shall pluck him out of his hand. His heart is already fixed upon the promised reward. "Sursum corda."

Strangers and Pilgrims

THIRD MONDAY AFTER EASTER

"*Strangers and pilgrims.*"—1 S. Pet. ii. 11.

Picture: the bedouin life of Abraham in Canaan.

Resolve: to examine the tone of my daily life.

I.—*Life as a pilgrimage.*

- (a) There is a double line of thought in the New Testament. "Strangers and pilgrims" represents one line, and both S. Peter and S. Paul, as well as the author of "Hebrews," have used it. There is something universal about the simile, as indeed in the experience which it summarizes; but actually it is intensely Hebraic (cp. Ps. xxxix. 12), and it is based upon the wanderings of Abraham in the land which was to be, but was not yet, his.
- (b) It is in this deeper significance that the simile passes from a universal reflection upon human life into a religious truth. There is in it the consciousness of another citizenship, of a life more satisfying than the present, and which does not pass away. In the presence of such a life one sits more loosely to the short span of earthly life and the conditions which bound it. The patriarchs saw the promises afar off.
- (c) To the Christian, imperfectly developed, the exclusive consideration of this aspect of life is capable of abuse; and yet more often he fails by neglecting it than by misrepresenting it. Normally there is not enough of the stranger and pilgrim about us, and we altogether fail to impress the world with any sense of our heavenly inheritance.

II.—*The obligations of daily life.*

- (a) S. Paul is most emphatic in his repeated insistence upon the duties of this present life and of one's obligations towards the world of human society. He has allowed us no excuse for "other-worldliness." He has not merely insisted upon the necessity of doing good, but upon the duty of business diligence, of loyalty to country, of seeing that one's religion is respected by the world. He knows nothing of a spiritual superiority which despises daily life or the opinion of the world.
- (b) But in an extreme form some of the early Christians did make this very natural error of regarding themselves as relieved from the ordinary affairs of daily life. There was much excuse for them, for they believed that the Lord would return very shortly. S. Paul also hoped for this, but it did not in any way unbalance his mind.
- (c) Even a limited conception of the range of Christian life can see that to some extent this obligation of daily life is not an unfortunate necessity, but provides the sphere for the exercise and training of that character which is the discipline of the Christian, and that it provides also the opportunity of impressing and winning others.

III.—*The Resurrection harmonizes.*

- (a) Few of us do not fail in more or less conspicuous degree to unify these two lines of thought. Either we think too much of the Christian life as solely, or at least primarily, future, and therefore tend to have a merely edifying interest in daily life as a means of increasing our own security in the future, or we are absorbed in the present as though our chief interests were involved in it.
- (b) But the Resurrection teaches us that the new life is already begun. Even Jesus Christ remained forty days on earth after his resurrection. It teaches us that we are strangers and pilgrims just in so far as we are children of God and members of the Body of Christ; it teaches us that the one Church is as truly on earth as it is in heaven, and that it is merely spiritual impatience if we desire to escape from the will of God whereby we are as yet in the Church militant.
- (c) The true Christian harmony is realized in that life of Christian fellowship with the Father and with the Son through the Spirit, and with one another in him. This fellowship is to be realized as much through work as in prayer, in the fulfilment of duty as in the delight of communion. All things are become new, and in that newness we are to be strangers and pilgrims to the world to which they are not become new.

The Insincerity of Balaam

THIRD TUESDAY AFTER EASTER

"Following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness."—2 S. Pet. ii. 15.

Picture: Balaam standing by the altar and reluctantly blessing Israel.

Pray: to deal sincerely with a besetting temptation.

I.—*Balaam the prophet.*

- (a) As Melchizedek and Jethro represent the high standard of official relationship, so Balaam and Job illustrate personal responsibility. Job is the ideal saint of the non-Jewish people (Ezek. xiv. 14), Balaam is the hideous warning of trifling with temptation (Numb. xxxi. 16; Apoc. ii. 14).
- (b) Balaam was a prophet, or diviner (Josh. xiii. 22), but he fell miserably through trifling with conscience. In the New Testament he is made the type of Christians who teach moral error for their own gain or through worldliness and unregenerated mind (2 S. Pet. ii.; Jude; Apoc. ii. 14).
- (c) The warning comes appropriately at this season, lest Christians be over-exalted by spiritual fervour. In the reaction from the restraints of Lent habits assert themselves again, old temptations begin to press, and there is again the snare of acquiescing, from force of habit, in some course of life which is fundamentally inconsistent with the profession of Christ's disciple.

II.—*The downward course of Balaam.*

- (a) The Old Testament reveals to us only the final stage of a life's decay. Balaam the diviner would not have tampered with Balak's offers had he not already acquired the reputation of one who would bless or curse as desired. The temptation, strengthened by years of easy self-indulgence, at length over-mastered him in a final assault.
- (b) Each stage of his engagement to Balak is an illustration of the danger of tampering with conscience, and each stage has made the next more easy and almost necessary. He encourages the repetition of bribes, is grieved at God's severity (Numb. xxii. 13), quibbles with God's voice (Numb. xxii. 20, 21); at length God will not restrain him (Numb. xxii. 34, 35), and Balaam must face the full force of the temptation which he has raised up against himself. There is no escape in life from the consequences of our own folly.
- (c) A long course of insincerity has brought Balaam to the length of juggling with holy things. The piety of his language is in sickening contrast to the presumption which leads him to tempt God by spiritual trickery to change his mind. This language no doubt helped to deceive Balaam; there is an awful snare in the easy use of language which is not the deliberate expression of the will.

III.—*The dénouement.*

- (a) Bible readers, often not being conversant with the subsequent history, have been deceived by the beauty of Balaam's words; and the treatment of him in the New Testament has seemed exaggeratedly severe. With malicious canniness, and determined not to lose the reward of Balak, the disappointed prophet devised a scheme whereby he felt sure that God's favour would be withdrawn from Israel (Numb. xxxi. 16; cf. Numb. xxv.).
- (b) Having returned to Balak to carry out this device, he remained among his people until the war of vengeance was undertaken, and in the battle met his appropriate fate (Numb. xxxi. 8). There is a stage in life when it is impossible to retreat: it is reached at the end of a long course of tampering with conscience.
- (c) The besetting sin of Balaam was love of money: the temptation has not ceased. From time to time the Christian conscience is scandalized by some appalling sin of one who has been highly esteemed: it is the repetition of the history of Balaam. "Be not high-minded." "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall."

The Way, the Truth, and the Life

THIRD WEDNESDAY AFTER EASTER

"*I am the way, the truth, and the life.*"—S. John xiv. 6.

"*It is expedient for you that I go away.*"—S. John xvi. 7.

Picture: the ascending Lord, our Forerunner and Author of life, manifesting the truth to us through the other Paraclete.

Resolve: to study more closely S. John's Gospel.*

I.—*The Way—through his Mediatorship.*

- (a) His mediatorial life lays open to us the way through himself to the Father; it is exercised through his going to the Father on our behalf (xiv. 12, 28; xvi. 17, 28). The discourses delivered on the eve of his Passion, but full of his Ascension-life and of the Holy Spirit, reveal to us the unity of his mediatorial work in death and the ascension. In both he is for us the way.
- (b) In this mediatorial work he will do for us whatsoever we ask (xiv. 13, 14; xvi. 23 ff.), for he loveth the Father and doeth his commandments (xiv. 31). Such fruitfulness follows from this, that whatsoever we ask the Father in his Name, he will give it us (xvi. 23 ff.; 26 ff.). He is the way of open access to the Father, and he has revealed him plainly to us as the one who himself loveth us (xvi. 25 ff.).
- (c) In his mediatorial work he is also the way for us of "greater works" (xiv. 12), which follow from the fulness of communication with the Father (xiv. 28). Two such greater works are here revealed: sorrow is turned into joy (xvi. 20-22), the discipline of life is found in the understanding of the Father to be its deepest joy: and the fruits of the Mediator's victory are assured to ourselves (xvi. 33), for we follow him as the way.

II.—*The Truth—revealed through the Paraclete.*

- (a) The Paraclete is the Spirit of truth (xiv. 16 f.; xv. 26; xvi. 13), carrying on the work of the Christ on earth from its obscurity to completeness (xiv. 26), unfolding and interpreting it by his abiding presence in the faithful (xiv. 17). His coming is dependent on the Son's going, and as sent by the Son he will glorify him by unveiling him to us (xvi. 7-14).
- (b) And yet further his coming is referred back to the Father (xiv. 26; xv. 26; xvi. 15), and his truth to his faithfulness to that which he continually hears (xvi. 13), even as the Son is true (viii. 26, 28, 42). Truth is never self-originated: it is loyalty to what is, not the presentation of what we would have, or of what we make for ourselves in independence.
- (c) So the truth is revealed to us by fellowship (xiv. 16), personal presence (xiv. 17), individual indwelling (xiv. 17). His abiding presence brings into clearer perception what is already implicitly known (xiv. 26), so that he bears witness of him who is the truth (xv. 26; xvi. 4). Nor is truth fragmentary, but must embrace the great categories of sin, righteousness, and judgment (xvi. 8 ff.).

III.—*The Life—himself comes.*

- (a) "Because I live ye shall live also" (xiv. 19) is expounded by the allegory of the Vine (xv. 1-25). While we have no life of our own, yet in him all his life is ours in its fruitfulness. In this vital truth the life of the Church is necessarily sacramental, and the Holy Spirit the sacramental agent.
- (b) The life is conditioned by love and obedience (xiv. 21-24), without which he cannot manifest himself. Yet it is in him that this love and obedience are fruitful (xv. 4 ff.); and the obedience is presented as dependent on the love (xiv. 21-23), and the love on his love communicated to the members (xv. 9 f.).
- (c) In this life of fellowship and obedience he comes to us as he cannot come to those who do not receive him (xiv. 18 ff., 22 ff.), so that we abide in him and he in us. So he, who is the way because he is the truth, and the truth because he is the life, is all these to us.

* This meditation is based upon the thought that to some degree these chapters (xiv.-xvi.) are an expansion of this triple elevation: the Way, xiv., 12-14, 28-31; xvi. 16-33; the Truth, xiv. 15-17, 25-27, xv. 26-xvi. 15; the Life, xiv. 18-21, 22-24, xv. 1-25.

The Power of the Resurrection

THIRD THURSDAY AFTER EASTER

"That I may know him and the power of his resurrection."—Phil. iii. 10.

Picture: the Apostles realizing the change made by the Resurrection in their conception of Jesus Christ.

Pray: to have the evidence of his resurrection in your own life.

I.—*S. Paul believed in the Resurrection.*

- (a) Most probably he had not known Christ after the flesh; his conversion was due to the risen Lord, and with him S. Paul spent his life in fellowship. Christ is risen, and therefore we have a living Saviour; we live not on the memory of a past event, but in communion with the life of one who lives for us victoriously through death.
- (b) This fact gave him the seriousness of life. It involved to him the truth that we shall rise in our bodies to give account of ourselves. To S. Paul it was the man Christ Jesus who rose; there was to him no touch of unreality in the experience of his sacred humanity. A spiritual resurrection might befit his divinity according to our limited notions; it did not befit his humanity.
- (c) The Resurrection carried to S. Paul the conviction of the fruitfulness of his redemption: Jesus Christ is risen, and therefore we are justified. The Resurrection may be regarded either as the divine assurance vouchsafed to us, or as the setting free of the powers of his life for the gathering of mankind unto himself. The life of justification is the life of union in the risen Lord.

II.—*The power which we are to know.*

- (a) The Resurrection set him free from the limitations which surround our present experience, and which before his death he, too, had shared. Henceforth he, as man, has entered upon our risen life, and there is a fellowship not to be measured by material nearness but by spiritual gift. That which in close human friendship is sympathy between two minds, which move alike, is in regard to the disciple and his risen Lord the actual gift of himself spiritually.
- (b) That which formerly he accomplished for us in his own person he now works in us who are united to him. He is not merely risen, but is he who died and lived again, and is alive for evermore. Not a resumption of his former life, but a carrying of his human life through the victory of death's conflict. By union with him we are joined to his triumph over sin and death.
- (c) "Begotten again to a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The powers of the risen life are distributed through the sacraments. Consider that the Pauline exposition of baptism is that of burial and resurrection, and that the Sacrament of the Altar, which shews forth his death, is the distribution of the living Bread, multiplied through death as the corn of wheat which abides alone except it die.

III.—*Some powers of his Resurrection.*

- (a) "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth" is the prologue to the Church's commission. At Easter the Church dares all things in her Risen Head. She opens heaven in the liberal font on Easter Eve, and in the tribunal of justice manifests the power of her Master to snatch souls from the grasp of Satan. This power is to be realized.
- (b) "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." The risen Master is the victor over the world which holds us down. To know his power is to be experiencing the attractions of the risen life, weaning the regenerate from the allurements of the temporal, material, visible. The risen life is already the ascending life. It is united to him who is ascended.
- (c) The risen Lord is at the right hand of God, and S. Paul has taught us that the life of the Christian is "in Christ." (See Col. iii. 1.) The power which he is to begin to know, and increasingly to know, is the assurance, the rest, the calm, of being stationed in him who is seated in the confidence of victory at the right hand of him who sitteth above the water-floods.

• The Church of the Messiah

THIRD FRIDAY AFTER EASTER

“*Whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.*”—Dan. vii. 27.

Picture: the Church as the extension of the Messiah.

Resolve: more reflection upon the nature of the Church.

I.—*Old Testament conception.*

- (a) One great truth which the apostles sought to impress alike upon Jew and Gentile was that Jesus is the fulfilment of Old Testament Messianic prophecy. One such line of prophecy is the Messianic kingdom; it began in the conception of the Davidic rule, and first found expression in the words of Nathan (2 Sam. vii. 12–16).
- (b) To later ages it seemed that David represented the ideal; it is his line, and not Saul's, which persevered; and the man after God's own heart was freely idealized. But failure only caused the prophecy to grow; the Messiah would restore the line of David. Admire the faith of the prophets, who refused to believe that God's word could fail.
- (c) Learn some lessons of failure and delayed hopes. The Davidic kingdom passed away, and then it was seen that Jerusalem itself must first be prepared; that the kingdom was not national, but universal, all the nations flocking to the holy city; that the Messiah was to be supramundane, and yet to pass through suffering for his people. Thus through adversity the minds of the true Israelites were broadened.

II.—*The Church.*

- (a) The Messiah in his person has fulfilled the ideal and carried it to higher stretches: the continuity of history is not broken, nor has history stopped. There is still growth in the Messianic kingdom, and the Messiah presses on to his fulness in a bodily way, *i.e.* in the way of the Church (Col. ii. 9 very possibly; Eph. i. 22, 23, etc.).
- (b) As Old Testament prophecy predicted, the Messiah has passed through his suffering and rejection for his people, and has founded his kingdom upon his risen life—the Church of the Resurrection. Without regeneration there can be no kingdom of the new Jerusalem; a new and far higher adoption of sonship has taken the place of the choice of the natural Israel.
- (c) This kingdom was declared by a late prophet to be everlasting. Its character is summed up in the word. Everlasting, because eternal, that is, spiritual and not material. Universal therefore necessarily, for the limited is temporal. Of necessity also unconquerable. It follows that the old Messianic kingdom was but a shadow, and that the body is of the Messiah (Col. ii. 17). In this kingdom nothing temporal or material can be of the essence of membership.

III.—*The kingdom and the Church.*

- (a) The Church as we see it is only the kingdom in the making; we see its first stages in successive generations, but always the first stages, adapted to redeemed humanity while still limited in experience by the material and temporal. To this partial view belong of necessity visible unity and organization. But the Church of the Risen Lord cannot rest in these, but sees them to be expressions for the time of spiritual oneness and fellowship, the partial realization of the one new Man in Christ.
- (b) But the life of the kingdom, its growth, and its strength, are not of the coherence together in visible unity and organization, but of the King upon his throne. The unity is realized in sacramental life, which is the conveyance of the eternal and spiritual to man in his bodily form.
- (c) Thus the kingdom has come, ever comes, and yet is to come: it is thus the extended life of her Lord who is come, and ever comes, and yet is to come. And the kingdom grows up into him in all things as it increaseth day by day until the fulness is attained. It is the constant effort of the members of Christ not to rest in the material, but to apprehend as seeing the invisible.

The Christian's Life a Risen Life

THIRD SATURDAY AFTER EASTER

"A resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."—Acts xxiv. 15.

Picture: a shepherd dividing the sheep from the goats.

Resolve: to realize my life as already risen.

I.—*Resurrection of just and unjust.*

- (a) S. Paul identified his Pharisaic brethren with himself in this hope. Slowly, and with much uncertainty, the Jewish nation had progressed to this belief out of we know not what crudity of primitive ideas. In the Sadducees may be seen the more conservative view crystallized by reason of the general rivalry between them and the Pharisees.
- (b) For one who believes that human life and universal history are a revelation of God, it is reasonable to look for some of the experiences whereby he has gradually impressed this conviction on the Jewish race. One such seems to have been the growing conviction of the inequality in human life between character and success. As the simplicity of life passed away, and the reflective power of men increased, it gradually became clear that misfortune did not dog the steps of the wicked, and that the lot of the just man was often to suffer wrong.
- (c) And associated with this was the gradual elevation of conception towards the level now attained, that the kingdom of God is not material, and that the blessings of holiness must be spiritual. Chiefly contributory to this was the aspiration of the devout after fellowship with God, and the conviction that such experience could not be bounded by the limits of earthly life.

II.—*Christians and the Resurrection.*

- (a) It is, however, still theoretically open to Christians to believe that the resurrection of Jesus Christ has only definitely proved the rising of the just. It is true that his human nature is universal, and yet it may be argued plausibly that the only guarantee of rising again is vital union with him in his risen life. S. Paul's great discussion 1 Cor. xv. does not seem to be concerned with the universal resurrection.
- (b) But in "Acts" S. Paul's belief is quite clear, and there is no doubt that it was the general Christian belief, as also that he identifies it with the Jewish hope. In "Thessalonians" there can be no mistaking the conviction that if Christ is expected as both Saviour and Judge, it is because the resurrection is of both the just and unjust. (See also 2 Cor. v. 10; Rom. xiv. 10; ii. 6 ff.)
- (c) His resurrection thus gave confirmation to the Jewish hope, and with true insight the apostle has seized upon the essential feature of the rising of the unjust. It is an eternal destruction from the presence of God (2 Thess. i. 9). Nought else matters, and to press symbolic language with a material literalism is to substitute crude and unwarranted conceptions for the essential revelation of the Gospel that life is fellowship with God.

III.—*The gravity and the grandeur.*

- (a) It is of the nature of spiritual truth that it combines these elements. For spiritual life is strenuous aspiration and an attainment by grace. The very magnificence of the vision of unclouded fellowship with God is the vision of the most unutterable loss of failing to attain to it.
- (b) It is to be noticed, therefore, that the apostle does not dwell, in writing to Christians, upon the joy of resurrection as an escape, but as a realization in full of that experience which has already begun in them as Christians. It is to depart and to be with Christ: it is to be for ever with the Lord: it is to be clothed upon: to put on incorruption, and the like.
- (c) Use, therefore, the present little experience of fellowship and spiritual happiness to whet the appetite. It is good to look forward if one realizes the future thus spiritually, that thereby one may be raised to greater desire; "for where the treasure is there will the heart be also."

The Spirit of Venture

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

"And none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?"—S. John xvi. 5.

Picture: S. Mark's departure from SS. Paul and Barnabas (Acts xiii. 13).

Pray: for the spirit of venture.

I.—*The occasion.*

- (a) Paul and Barnabas had gone forth, called by the Holy Ghost, dismissed by the Church of Antioch to fulfil the divine call. And Mark was their attendant. Much may be pleaded in extenuation of his conduct, but the fact remains that he lacked the faith of venture, because he could not tread beyond the visible limits of his own experience and the conceptions already reached by the Church of Antioch. He lacked as yet the quality of growth.
- (b) Our blessed Lord was preparing the disciples for a great departure—a departure demanding the highest faith, a venture far beyond the limits of their experience, and involving in the immediate present the trial of failure. Through death he was to depart to the Father, that he might lead them into the higher regions of fellowship with himself. Would they depart from him?
- (c) As with S. Mark, so now with the body of the disciples, life was self-centred and narrowly bounded. They could conceive of nothing but the continuance of the present. Even after many centuries the Church has not the spirit of venture, cannot dissociate herself from the present in the face of development, cannot distinguish between her true life and the form of it.

II.—*None of you asketh me.*

- (a) There is a spirit of reticence with our Lord, which these words reveal. The life of the apostles was not yet pentecostal; they were bound by experience and custom. They did not dare ask him questions, but could only follow tremblingly. They knew that he was beyond them, but could not venture forth with him. Their timidity checked free speech.
- (b) Something of this probably was the case with S. Mark. It is difficult to think that the younger and subordinate companion could have persisted in his determination if he had freely asked the other two, and presented to them his difficulty. They would have borne the responsibility. Instead of asking, he probably dwelt upon his own view until he was so obsessed by it that he could see nothing but wrong in what Paul and Barnabas were contemplating.
- (c) This painful reticence with our Lord is a measure of our little faith: bound by our own conceptions, we either have no desire to ask, or we are afraid. Is it any wonder that we do not progress? Is it any wonder if we have not even the desire to venture, let alone the courage for it?

III.—*Whither goest thou?*

- (a) The disciples were self-centred: their only thoughts were of what would happen to themselves if he went away: sorrow often makes us selfish. Of his going, whether to the dispersed among the Gentiles (S. John vii. 33 ff.), or his departure by death, and whether it was a matter of joy to him or otherwise, they had no leisure from self to think. Learn to think with Christ.
- (b) So, too, S. Mark left the apostles without an attendant to penetrate into new districts. Here the self-centredness was not from sorrow, but from isolated judgment and over-confidence in his own opinion. Thank God that, like him, we have opportunities to repent of our reserve and self-centredness: pray that, like him, we may use them.
- (c) The Christian needs ever to be asking this question of his Master, as S. Peter asked it when he was leaving Rome: "*Quo vadis?*" In varying form the same answer will come to all: I am going to the Father through the way of suffering and death by self-abandonment. And the disciple asks that he may follow, daring to follow because the Master leads the way and has revealed it in his resurrection as the way of life. And in each case, when loyally asked for the purpose of following, the answer proves to be, "It is expedient for you that I go away."

All Good from God

FOURTH MONDAY AFTER EASTER

"Every good gift . . . cometh down from the Father of lights,"—S. Jas. i. 17.

Picture: the sun in the heavens.

Resolve: to refer all good back to God.

I.—*The context.*

- (a) In the pressure of trial, in the strain of delay and suspense, it is very difficult to think generously and largely of the good God: it is so hard, then, to believe that he is absolute good, always communicating in goodness to others. He seems to us to act by fits and starts, being persuadable to periodical acts of benevolence. Instead of believing him, we subject him to the tests of a limited and self-interested judgment.
- (b) S. James says that all good is from him, and not only that to him we must look for the highest good. He would have us not look for good elsewhere. He is not the ultimate but the immediate court of appeal. The good which comes to us through others comes from him. And the very good which at times comes between us and God, as we make an idol of the person who transmits it, is itself the gift of God.
- (c) S. James calls him the Father of lights. The expression originally referred to the heavenly bodies, those rivals in worship, symbols of a power which men contrasted with their own notions of Jehovah. It passed into the meaning of spiritual and intellectual light, our modern rivals of the source of all and every kind of good.

II.—*S. James' illustration.*

- (a) The sun in the heavens is the father of lights. So he whom S. James calls the Father of lights is the Sun and source of all good. The sun is variable in its position, as S. James would say; but he, the very Sun, does not change in himself, for change is the condition of imperfection. Did he change, it would be either a bettering of himself or the reverse, and either is inconceivable.
- (b) The sun is subject to obscurity from the outside; but nothing unexpected can happen to Almighty God. The march of events casts no shadow upon him. Nor does he cast shadow by his turning, for he is as the sun shineth in its brightness, the sun in the heavens, as the bridegroom come forth from his chamber (Ps. xix. 5, 6).
- (c) S. James has contrasted him with the sun, which is the natural symbol of all the good gifts of nature. We, perhaps, would rather compare him with the sun, although we still speak of the sun's changes as the Bible speaks of God changing his mind. Thus we may think how it is that clouds obscure and hide, while the sun still shines, and how we feel cold because the earth has changed her position. So it is when we do not ascribe all good to God.

III.—*The gift and the giving (see R.V.).*

- (a) The double expression lays stress not only on the goodness of the gift, but on the liberality of the giver. Strive to pass on from the gift to the giver, by thanksgiving and by service; even in higher gifts it is a temptation to rest, as though they were our own. Yet he who gives is greater than his gift.
- (b) And in some gifts we are disappointed, not thinking of the invariable goodness of the giver. We do not penetrate into the gifts which look so trifling, so homely, so unattractive, or which are so unintermittently given. The lesser gifts we fail to refer to him, and we forget to reflect that his unchangeableness makes it impossible that he should send good one day and evil another.
- (c) Now that we are already forgetting Easter, and are not yet getting ready for Ascension and Whitsun-tide, reflect once more upon Passion-tide, the absolution for Easter Communion, the Resurrection. Pass on to the lesser gifts suggested by spring, the Rogation days of next week, the cheerfulness of life, etc.

Teachableness

FOURTH TUESDAY AFTER EASTER

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."—S. John xvi. 12.

Picture: the scene of his farewell discourse, and these words as part of it.

Resolve: to seek from God a teachable spirit.

I.—*Consider the revelation here of the divine mind.*

- (a) His desire to bestow himself. He has been with his disciples for some time, giving himself freely to them; yet still he has "many things to say." His gifts are not easily exhausted, and assuredly his words are rich gifts to those who hear them.
- (b) His patience. It was on the eve of his Passion, and the disciples were not prepared for it: yet he is content to say, "But ye cannot bear them." How rarely is any one able to face a crisis patiently, when through the dulness of his subordinates he has to meet it with inadequate readiness, although himself had foreseen the situation, and had striven to prepare them!
- (c) His hopefulness. The word "now" on the eve of his crucifixion arrests attention. His experience of their dulness has not discouraged him. It is wonderful to think of the Master from time to time saying to his Church, and to one of his disciples, "Not now; but later on you shall hear and understand." And in the special crisis of the words one is reminded that he saw beyond the immediate into the Resurrection power and the activity of the Holy Spirit.

II.—*Apply the words—*

- (a) To the history of the Church. Again and again it has been so; each crisis, only partially understood, has given place to the next age with its fresh lessons to be assimilated. The Church never stands still; she is always being educated, always—it is well to face the truth—failing to learn fully the lessons of each stage of education.
- (b) To the stages of a life. It is well if we learn the lessons which he would teach us at this moment; the others can wait until their time comes. He will teach the child through simplicity, the youth through struggle, the young man through perplexity, the middle-aged through monotony, the old through submission.
- (c) To states of life. Consider matrimony, the priesthood, and the religious rule. In each one how little the disciple understands of the future to which he pledges himself! The bridegroom does not know what married life is, while he pledges himself to it by reason of his confidence in the bride. The priest, the religious, enter upon a life of which they have no experience, yet knowing that each step in it is to be an unfolding of the words of Christ.

III.—*Learn—*

- (a) The necessity of pressing on to know more. How little one has learned as yet! And whose fault is this? But do not exaggerate the blame: the good God does not mean us to be perfect yet, but only to be absorbing the lessons of our present stage. Are we taking pains to do this? We should strive to bear the things which he would say now.
- (b) That progress is through the divine speaking. Consider whether our progress may not be delayed through misapprehension of this truth: perhaps we have thought that it lay in our perseverance, or our mortifications, and we have been practising the Christian life carefully as a system, but have not heard him speaking. It is true that he speaks in many ways: but let us see to it that we hear his voice and do not harden our hearts.
- (c) Patience with self. If he is patient with us, our impatience can only be due to a feeble desire for self-made progress rather than to hear what he has to say. Learn patience with others: do not expect the child to be a man, and the young woman to be middle-aged. Be patient with the Church: he has yet many things to say to her and to each one of us, and he waits. "Yet many things": eternity belongs to God.

Death and Resurrection

FOURTH WEDNESDAY AFTER EASTER

"We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead."—2 Cor. i. 9.

Picture: S. Paul's comparison of his straits: he has, so to speak, fought with beasts at Ephesus (1 Cor. xv. 32).

Pray: for a good death.

I.—*S. Paul shared his Master's experiences.*

- (a) He had been in such dire straits that he compared his lot with that of a gladiator in the arena face to face with death. And soon after this—a proof that he was not exaggerating when he spoke of having the sentence of death in him—had come the riot of Demetrius.
- (b) Christ's power is often misunderstood for weakness: the power to be undaunted, to triumph by refusal to be shaken. It was through the victory of death that he opened to us the gate of everlasting life.
- (c) But S. Paul understood. He had put his trust in God which raiseth the dead. "When I am weak, then am I strong." If God had not delivered him then, as yet again, out of the mouth of the lion (2 Tim. iv. 17), he was yet confident in God which raiseth his own dead unto the glory of an endless life.

II.—*Death and Resurrection. S. Paul had faced the crisis.*

- (a) These are the two facts of life. We must die: and we shall rise—but to what? It is the union of the two which gives the importance to each. Death would be nothing, were it not for judgment and the life to come. The gravity of resurrection is that its character is already eternally fixed.
- (b) Christ shared this crisis. He died: he rose. Again it is the union of the two which gives the importance to either. His resurrection is the divine attestation to the victory of his death: he died that his resurrection might be for us fruitful of eternal gifts. He died for our sins and rose again for our justification.
- (c) To some indeed Christ is yet dead—an historical figure of the long past. They know nothing of a risen Saviour, living in the heart with the power of a new life. "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection."

III.—*God will raise us from the dead.*

- (a) It is the essential hope of Christians. We do not believe in a God who for us lives only during the twenty or seventy years of the present stage of our life; who fills us now with eternal aspirations and longings, which fade away unfulfilled in the grave. The Spirit of Christ within has planted hopes of holiness and heavenly joys which the resurrection alone can satisfy.
- (b) It is a serious hope: for resurrection carries with it a judgment, and makes our present life a preparation. Therefore to know the power of his resurrection then, we must seek to know it now in the power of the life risen with Christ which seeks those things which are above.
- (c) It is a vital hope. In ourselves the sentence of death. Is it not so? But we trust in God. Is it not best so? Who raiseth the dead: raiseth to the newness of endless life those who have made him their life here. For eternal life is not future only, but it is life in God: the life to which God raiseth us is already begun in the newness of baptismal grace.

The Hope of the Future

FOURTH THURSDAY AFTER EASTER

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."—Rom. viii. 11.

Picture: the rising again of Christians to an expanded life after the disciplinary training which follows death.

Pray: that the hope of the future, made solid by the rising of Jesus Christ, may be an incentive to Christian living.

I.—*The Incarnation permanent for our sakes.*

- (a) An Incarnation which did not include the Resurrection is a theophany, a Divine appearance. For the promise of "God with us" is in such case lost to faith at the very moment of the fulfilment of its hope; because prior to the death of the Son of God the conditions of fellowship between God and man were not fulfilled. Just when we look for the pledge of man's restoration in man's risen union with God, the solution in the person of the God-man would fail us.
- (b) Consider that there was no union with God in Christ until his resurrection. Christ risen is the second Adam, the life-giving Spirit. His Spirit dwelling in us is the power which is to quicken our mortal bodies. This explains why the Risen Christ founds the Church and institutes the Sacraments.
- (c) The Resurrection led to the gift of the Holy Ghost; as S. John says that the Holy Ghost was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified (S. John vii. 39). There is an essential connection between the Son and the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit; he comes to Christ's Body; he secures the permanent presence of Christ in a manner far more intimate and internal than his material presence could vouchsafe.

II.—*The consecration of the human body.*

- (a) The permanence of the human body of Jesus Christ united to himself as an essential condition of his abiding humanity is the revelation to us of the gospel of the body. The advance in the development of his human body through the Resurrection is the revelation which satisfies during this experience of bodily weakness and decay.
- (b) And strikes at the root of all false asceticism, which may be based upon false principle, or may at any time appear in the experience of Christians if the mind be not healthily balanced. Apply this truth to the practice and limitation of fasting. Apply it likewise to the relation between body and spirit in the unity of one person, as experienced in the mystery of pain.
- (c) And teaches the proper reverence due to the body. It is not reverence if one injure the body which has been redeemed; nor if one despise and neglect it. There is real reverence in the care of physical health, while sins against the body are both blasphemous and in most cases regardless of the intimate relationship between the body and one's personality. Perhaps the greatest evil of impurity is that it defiles the mind.

III.—*The source of our nourishment and strength.*

- (a) Our Christian position is that of fellowship with the Father through the Son; and through the Son as Mediator, primarily as mediating through his human nature, and because of that as Mediator also through redemption. Through the Son we may at any moment take up our position in him, the Brother, and call upon the Father, sure of being heard.
- (b) The resurrection of Jesus Christ differs altogether from the miracle of restoring to life. We seek resurrection, not renewal of the old life, development not restoration, the passing away of limitations, not their calling back. The consummation of life is declared to us in the form of Christ's resurrection.
- (c) And this consummation, as seen in the First-fruits, assures us of the satisfaction of our desire for personal identity. If this be a serious warning that the past and present live into the future, it is also an uplifting joy. We hope in the future to glorify God for that mercy which now passes comprehension.

The Imperiousness of Jesus

FOURTH FRIDAY AFTER EASTER

"*The disciples knew not that it was Jesus.*" "*Knowing that it was the Lord.*"—S. John xxi. 4, 12.

Picture : the disciples not daring to ask him.

Resolve : to realize his imperious claim.

I.—"*Jesus stood on the shore.*"

- (a) Very much in life must be commonplace and secular. We may thank God for that. Life has much repetition, even monotony. The disciples very happily had their fishing to fall back upon. It was the necessity of their daily work which helped to save them from a strained spiritual excitement after the Easter manifestations.
- (b) There is a useful sanity about plain duty and work. How foolish to imagine that it is an obstacle to true religion! There was no morbidness about these fisher-folk, inclining them to see an Easter appearance in every stranger whom they met. The great thing is that they were so doing their daily work that he *could* manifest himself to them.
- (c) We who have reflected often on the words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," will find much to think upon in this commonplace appearance of a stranger on the beach enquiring of the fishers. Once as a gardener, then as a stranger on the road, now as a spectator of the fishing-boat, he was teaching them and us to find no incongruity in his presence under various forms of common daily life.

II.—"*They knew not that it was Jesus.*"

- (a) The experiences of Good Friday and Easter have left indelible marks on the disciples, but they are not seen immediately. Do not be disheartened if after spiritual enlightenment there come experiences in which Jesus is not recognized. There must be quiet times for assimilation; truths must be impressed by repetition: only thus shall we be prepared for further advance.
- (b) Learn to look for him in forms under which he is not easily recognized. He comes thus, to those who will receive him, in experiences which look very unpromising; in misfortunes, trials and sorrows.
- (c) The spiritual life may easily suffer from getting into a groove. One has only seen Jesus as yet under certain forms. But he has to be seen in many new ways, and we have to pass in our experience from the human to the divine, from Jesus to the Lord.

III.—"*It is the Lord.*"

- (a) Peter and John have thus known him; now each is to recognize him with a sense of awe, not daring to ask him. The one in the life which prepares for Rome's conflict of world-power, and the other in the intellectual struggle of a new age which has not known Christ after the flesh, and realizes him as an idea and not as Person and Saviour.
- (b) The Resurrection emphasizes the imperiousness of Christ. To most his first relationship with us is more akin to the pre-crucified life, and only by entry into the depths of his Passion do we pass into the life of our Lord. We do not recognize Jesus in the spiritual failures of life. "Have ye any meat?" And at last we must say, "No." Then in emptiness of soul we know that it is the Lord.
- (c) By many of us, only partly converted, the demand of his absolute claim is only gradually realized in the painful crucifixion of self, whereby slowly we come to learn that he will not have anything short of absolute surrender. And yet we cannot draw back, for we are learning that it is the Lord.

The Church of the Risen Lord

FOURTH SATURDAY AFTER EASTER

"*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*"—S. John ii. 19.

"*In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.*"—Eph. ii. 21.

Consider: the Church as the Body of the risen Christ.

Pray: for a great increase of faith in the true nature of the Church.

I.—*The Church of the risen Christ.*

- (a) Every blessing which we possess is a fruit of the Incarnation. To understand this verity our thoughts must pass on through the Passion to the Resurrection as revealing to us the permanence and issue of the Incarnation. So, too, the individual, if he is to see somewhat of the relation of the Incarnation to himself, must pass beyond himself to the society of Christ, in which his life is included.
- (b) A human society can give no more to its members than human gifts: the Church of the risen Christ, his extended Body, bestows through his triumphant and developed humanity the gift of himself upon human society. The revelation of the Incarnation is not complete so long as the Son of Man is only seen in individual relationship and through the media of sight and sound. The gospel of humanity is dependent upon the oneness of the life-giving Spirit and his universal spiritual body.
- (c) The risen Christ gives patience in the presence of the imperfections of the Church as seen at any moment in that part which comes under our inspection, and which is the manifestation of the divine life struggling to express itself in the lives of men who are still imperfect. We see not yet that Body that shall be.

II.—*The union of the Church with her risen Head.*

- (a) No union is so close as that between Christ and his Church: she is not only joined to him as a bride to her husband, but is himself in extended manifestation. It is not a closeness which is satisfied by the truth that he loved the Church and gave himself for it, but a union as that of a man with his own flesh (Eph. v. 25-30). These thoughts surpass apprehension saving in so far as they are applied through drawing upon his life.
- (b) One application of them is to perceive the mission of the Church. As the Body of Christ, her primary purpose is to represent him, by the reproduction of his life, even as he, when he was upon earth, represented the Father, so that the world may believe that the Father hath sent him (see S. John xvii. 20-23).
- (c) And, too, it is the risen Christ to whom the Church gives witness, by manifesting the powers of his risen life. "And greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father." In trivial ways we see some applications of this truth, but we have never dared to throw ourselves upon it boldly. When the Church does this there will be no further doubt as to her mission to be rather than to do. Meanwhile, faith is sustained by the knowledge of his risen life.

III.—*The risen life of the Church.*

- (a) As the Church of the risen Lord, her life is in the heavenlies, and it follows that her kingdom is not of this world. She can neither have human ambitions nor use human arts, nor judge herself by human standards. As her warfare is not carnal, so neither can her weapons be.
- (b) But particularly her characteristics are those of the risen Lord. The Passion is imprinted upon her, as its marks remain in the risen body of her Lord; and as with him so, too, with her, by virtue of her oneness with him, the sufferings of the Church are her crowning glory. But her chief note is triumphant victory through suffering; as the Body of the victorious Christ her life is the calm assurance of progressive conquest.
- (c) As the risen Lord has gathered up into himself all the powers of heaven and earth, that he may adorn his temple with them, so she, fixing her gaze upon his risen body seated at the right hand of God, grasps his inexhaustible supplies, and fearlessly relies upon them and uses them, that she may be our guide through life and in death.

Prayer in Christ

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

"Ask, and ye shall receive."—S. John xvi. 24.

Picture : our Lord teaching us to pray.

Resolve : to watch myself that I pray "in Christ."

I.—*The revelation of the Father.*

- (a) Throughout his ministry this was the great revelation : see S. Matt. vii. 7 ff.; and the Lord's Prayer. And later he gave the same teaching privately to his disciples. But more powerful than any teaching was the practice of his own life of entire trust in the Father. He made his people realize the Father, his and theirs.
- (b) And he, too, bore himself to his people as a Father. He did not use the name of himself, and they were wont rather to regard him as Rabbi; but he was as no rabbi had been. Without knowing it, it was through his relation to them that they were able to grasp his revelation of the Father.
- (c) In the early part of his ministry the revelation was of the Father alone. Later, his own name was blended with his : "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name." It was part of the revelation of the uniqueness of the Son. And they, too, were to ask as sons, but especially in his Name as Son. To grasp this uniqueness is to deepen belief in the power of prayer.

II.—*Why ask ?*

- (a) Always insisted upon, although he knoweth what we need before we ask, and not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father. For, if sons, then the spirit of sonship must prompt us to ask. And to ask develops our realization of sonship. Much of our Christianity is an undeveloped gift, or has become like an atrophied limb.
- (b) The Father wishes so : every father must so wish. Do not speculate, however, whether, if I do not ask, he will still give. Of course he will ; all that the unasking son will accept without acknowledgment. Does he not make the sun to shine alike upon the just and unjust ?
- (c) But the highest gifts can only be given to those who ask. For the Father's highest gifts are those of intimate fellowship ; they are the gifts of higher spiritual education, requiring a training of the desires, and the discipline of the life which is learning to ask in his Name, whose power of intercession lies deep in the mystery of his Passion.

III.—*Rogation-tide.*

- (a) It is commonly supposed that no opportunity is given for thanks for the fruits of the earth. Few think to ask if any opportunity is given for praying for them. It is a humiliating reflection. Yet our calendar proposes to us the first of August as Lammas Day (Loaf-mass), and gives us three Rogation days this week. Is there not something better in this Prayer-book teaching than in the popular Evensong of harvest thanksgiving ?
- (b) How full of instruction, too, is the time of Rogation-tide, immediately preceding the Ascension festival ! "Ask, and ye shall receive" is, in fact, thus closely related to the work of the ascended Intercessor. All prayer is "through Jesus Christ our Lord" ; and we are weak in prayer just as we forget him and his power of presenting our petitions.
- (c) But for us, too, prayer is the work of ascended men ; of men sitting with Christ above, whose hearts are in heaven (Eph. ii. 6). For the life of prayer is the unfolding of the life of fellowship ; and in this light all its difficulties are to be faced. Take the problems of prayer, and view them in the revelation of the life of prayer given to us by Jesus Christ when he was on earth.

The Power of Intercession

FIFTH MONDAY AFTER EASTER

"I have pardoned according to thy word."—Numb. xiv. 20.

Picture: the scene.

Resolve: to use the power of intercession which in union with the risen Lord is mine.

I.—*The power of the risen Lord's intercession.*

- (a) Consider the power of intercession which Moses had by reason of his memory of past mercies (ver. 13), of divine promises (ver. 17) and of former forgivenesses (ver. 19). Contrast the short memory of the people (ver. 4). There is great encouragement for intercession in such a memory of spiritual blessings—the spirit of gratitude, simple faith in God's word, appreciation of forgiveness.
- (b) Consider Moses herein as a type of Christ; he is the mediator (Gal. iii. 19 f.; Heb. viii. 6, etc.), and he fulfils this office by intercession (Exod. xxxii. 32; Rom. viii. 34, etc.). Like the divine Master, the reproaches of God fell on him. (Cf. this scene and Exod. xvi. 7, 8; Rom. xv. 3.)
- (c) Consider then the power of the risen Lord in intercession; the power of human nature brought triumphantly through death into the fulfilment of divine promises; the power of intercession for the fulfilment of the divine purposes. Moses had brought the people out of Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea at the command of God: he was not likely to forget or to be weak in intercession. A greater than Moses, Son not servant, has brought his people out of the land of bondage through the baptism of water at the command and will of God.

II.—*Zeal for God gives energy in intercession.*

- (a) There may in human intercession be great difference between official advantage and personal zeal, as with the priest. Moses combined the two, as they will always be combined in a true man. The individual Christian who fails to use his power of intercession does so through failure to appreciate his incorporation into Christ as sharer in his power and efficiency.
- (b) The zeal for God exhibited by Moses may be traced in this episode: "The Egyptians will hear" (ver. 13)—"They will tell the inhabitants of the land" (ver. 14)—"God will be discredited" (ver. 16). What enthusiasm such considerations will give to the most unselfish form of prayer, enabling us to pray as the expression of our pain and shame at the meagre representation of Christ's ideal, and of the discredit which we Christians bring upon our Lord and God!
- (c) In the unity of the Person of Jesus Christ there can be no division between the official and personal: we may mark the zeal prior to his crucifixion—"The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (S. John ii. 17: cf. the verses following). But at this season consider rather the added experience of the cross, which has been the drinking of the cup of shame at the dishonour of God in human sin and rebellion.

III.—*The boldness of intercession.*

- (a) It is remarkable with what daring Moses stands up before Almighty God (vers. 12 ff.), exceeding that of Abraham (Gen. xviii. 23-33). It is such daring which our Lord desires (S. Luke xviii. 1 ff.), and which the Christian is invited to exercise in him, seeing that he intercedes in the person of the triumphant risen Christ.
- (b) Such boldness is the expression of living faith. Moses had talked face to face with God, and knew that the pilgrimage life of Israel was his work. Such boldness is only ours if we too know God face to face and perceive his character in the revelation of Jesus Christ, and appreciate the triumphant joy of the Father in the ascended humanity of the Son.
- (c) And such boldness has its reward (ver. 20). It is this reward of the Passion which suggests intercession as a Paschal meditation. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." The limitations of his human nature have been withdrawn, and the experience of his extended human nature is the prophecy of the experience of redeemed humanity in him. Let us begin to enter into this as we grasp the victory of the Resurrection.

Prayer anticipating Heaven

FIFTH TUESDAY AFTER EASTER

"Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he will give it you. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."—S. John xvi. 23, 24.

Picture: the prayers of S. Paul for his converts.

Resolve: to consider prayer as an anticipation of the communion of heaven.

I.—*"In that day."*

- (a) From the Ascension and onwards the disciples would ask no more questions. Perfect knowledge is one fruit of the consummated restoration of man. Into this we may begin to enter now through the fellowship of prayer. This knowledge is imparted; it is not in ourselves, but in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (S. John xiv. 26), who illuminates intellect and will and conscience, and harmonizes them.
- (b) It is filial. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father." It depends on relationship to the Father; that is, that the knowledge is experimental. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." One must approach him as a son if one is to use the fellowship of prayer fruitfully.
- (c) It is devotional.^a "In that day." It depends on union with the ascended Lord. God is truth; knowledge, which is the apprehension of truth, is the beholding of God. And God is best seen in prayer, meditation, and obedience. See 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

II.—*"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name."*

- (a) Perfect fulfilment of prayer is another fruit of the Ascension. Mark the freedom of prayer: "Whatsoever." There is no limit within the bounds of sonship. What range of intercession! And it is of the Father that one asks: do not fear mistakes in prayer; the Father makes allowance and interprets. Use the freedom with confidence. He will answer aright the prayer of freedom.
- (b) The condition of successful prayer: "In my name"—according to the will of Christ (1 S. John v. 14). This condition of "Thy will be done" is fundamental to the Christian in prayer as in other spheres of activity. S. Augustine warns us against obstinate self-will in prayer, lest God deal with us as with the mixed multitude in the wilderness (Ps. lxxviii. 29-31).
- (c) The basis of effectual prayer. Christian prayer has its freedom, its success, and its confidence, because it is a fellowship established on the basis of the atonement which Jesus Christ has wrought.

III.—*"That your joy may be full."*

- (a) Perfect joy is another result. Joy must issue from fellowship; but prayer is not the asking for joy. Elsewhere Christ has said that it is his joy which becomes our own (S. John xv. 11). That joy alone can fill man's soul which is Christ's, the joy of complete surrender to the will of God. Then it is that prayer issues in joy, because prayer is in harmony with the will of God.
- (b) It is permanent. "That your joy may be that which hath attained its fulfilment" (Greek). "Your joy no man taketh from you." "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And it is progressive: we are to enter into a joy that never fails.
- (c) It is our own joy. "Your joy." His joy of self-surrender is appropriated, so as to become our own joy. Natural joy has been transformed by the reception of his joy. We grow up into him in all things. Man becomes as he prays.

' The Ascension an Advance

FIFTH WEDNESDAY AFTER EASTER

"Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father."—S. John xx. 17.

Picture: the scene.

Resolve: to aim after advance in the spiritual life.

I.—*The Resurrection an advance.*

- (a) Mary would cling to him, seeing in him a restoration rather than advance. She had known him in a limited degree as a penitent, and to that knowledge she would return. But the key-note of our life must be progress. For lack of that many fall away altogether, and others find no abiding satisfaction in Christ.
- (b) In the Resurrection he has entered as Man upon his fuller life for man. He is the First-begotten from the dead. Mary would retain him as the friend of those days in which he was straitened (S. Luke xii. 50); but she was to rise in his resurrection to new experiences, seeking those things which are above and not holding him down upon the earth.
- (c) In this risen life he has advanced for us beyond the limits of time and space. Mary would have held him down to the Jerusalem of her own time. We too would often thus confine him to the time and place of our own little minds, when he is prepared to lead us into fellowship with the Father.

II.—*"For I am not yet ascended."*

- (a) The Ascension was the consummation of Easter. For us he lingered forty days, but his ascended life was already begun. Thus gently did he deal with the disciples of the first days, gradually raising them to a perception of his fuller life. So too now he weans us from our earthly knowledge, leading us on gently, patiently waiting for us, now coming and now going, until we are drawn to a higher knowledge of him.
- (b) In this new life he marks the character of the Christian life, which is to sit loosely to the things of this world. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." More earnest care to rise must mark our life if we would retain fellowship with him in his present life. The worldly-minded lose him, for he cannot be held down.
- (c) S. Paul laid great stress on this distinction between knowing Christ after the flesh and after the spirit. But this is not to be understood either as though the Christ of the Gospels before his crucifixion was not a revelation of that which he now is—"Go to my brethren" (S. John xx. 17)—or as though the knowledge of Christ is to be identified with a belief in his death, resurrection, and ascension. "That I may know *him*, and the power of his resurrection."

III.—*"Touch me not."*

- (a) The person of the risen Lord forbids us to regard him as the merely human friend. All this he is, and closer and more faithful than any human friend; but he is infinitely more. He is the Lord of heaven and earth who has vouchsafed to draw near to us in such wise that he may draw us up to himself in an ascending life, and in himself to the Father. "I ascend to my Father and your Father."
- (b) Mary had a task to perform. "Go to my brethren." The Christian obligation forbids a self-centred devotion to a human friendship in the luxury of private enjoyment; for its fellowship is with him and with his brethren. And, as it always is, the obligation was a condition of healthy life and spiritual progress.
- (c) The new conditions of his incarnate life emphasize for us the truth that the sphere of Christians is extended beyond the local and temporal. We have passed from the material to the spiritual, from the letter to the spirit, from the type to the verity, from a ritual system to the sacraments. Yet in some measure we often forget this, and neglecting the power of his ascended reign find in Christianity only a new set of obligations.

The Ascension

ASCENSION DAY

"And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."—S. Luke xxiv. 51.

Picture: the last sight of our blessed Lord in the attitude of blessing. This aspect of the Ascension is the permanent impression to be left on our hearts.

Resolve: to pay more heed to the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

I.—*The preparations of the heart.*

- (a) In his education of his disciples he always prepares for the next stage. He warned them of his departure in Crucifixion and prepared their hearts by unveiling the character of his service: "Let him take up his cross daily and follow me." The Resurrection was anticipated in the miracles of raising from the dead and by his specific teaching: "And after three days he shall rise again." He trained them for the Ascension by the appearances of the forty days.
- (b) So now, as a foreshadowing of the coming gift of the Holy Spirit, and to mark the character of his ascension relation to his own, he was parted from them in the act of blessing. The last sight of him guaranteed to them that it was expedient for them that he went away. They caught the truth, "and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (S. Luke xxiv. 52).
- (c) The same training of the disciples' hearts for the next stage of spiritual revelation still goes on: let the present lesson be appropriated, and it will be seen that it has prepared us to receive what comes next. Christian life is progressive, and each lesson learned is a blessing of which the first appreciation is the power to enter upon a new stage. Apply to the history of your own life.

II.—*The Ascension life is pre-eminently one of blessing.*

- (a) The idea of blessing is the bestowal of good will on the part of a superior. Melchizedek blessed Abram (Gen. xiv. 19). The priests of the old covenant blessed the people of God in his name (Numb. vi. 23 ff.): it was the pledged guarantee of God's good-will to his people, and of all that flowed out from this relationship.
- (b) The Ascension realizes the greatness of Christian blessing: the sacred humanity of the Son of Man has entered upon its fulness of intimacy with the Father on our behalf (see Ps. iii. 7, 8). "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men" (Eph. iv. 8). Thus it is true that "all things are yours . . . and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 21-23).
- (c) The ascended Lord as High Priest of our profession blesses his people in the fulness of the atonement which he hath wrought (see Heb. viii. 10-12). The King upon his throne, "crowned with glory and honour," blesses his people of his royal bounty (1 Kings x. 13). And in his royal throne he has associated his people with himself. "I and the children which God hath given me" (Heb. ii. 13).

III.—*The last sight of our Lord presents his permanent relationship to us.*

- (a) The Church is the pledged sphere of blessing. "Of his fulness did we all receive, and grace for grace." Within the Church his people receive the full fruits of his victorious Passion. It is all summed up in the gift of sonship, the blessing of adoption.
- (b) The Holy Spirit is the outpouring of blessing. As the Spirit of God and of Christ, he bestows on us the blessing of the Father through Christ (Eph. i. 3). The gifts of the Spirit, varying according to our needs, are the outcome of this good will of God Almighty towards us.
- (c) Thus the present position of Christians is pre-eminently the life of grace. Grace is the communication of blessing according to our needs. To be more mindful of the inexhaustible resources of our heavenly blessing would surely make us more prompt to draw upon it in gifts of grace.

Anticipating Heaven

FRIDAY AFTER ASCENSION

"When the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore."—S. John xxi. 4.

Picture the scene: Jesus Christ on the firm shore of eternity; the fishermen out on the sea of life.

Resolve: to make heaven a real anticipation.

I.—*"That night they caught nothing."*

- (a) A picture of life before Pentecost. This without depreciating the revelation of the old covenant (see Heb. vii. 19; ix. 9; Rom. v. 6; Gal. iv. 31; S. John i. 17). This scene manifestly an occasion when the old was passing away, and all things were becoming new to them. It was "the third time" (S. John xxi. 14). The two former had been on the two first days of the week and in Jerusalem; now he appears in promised Galilee, where he will speak of the things concerning the kingdom of God.
- (b) And he reveals the character of the new life. He shows that he will guide and bless the Church in all ages, by sea and by land, and will work through human ministry. And he reveals the character of the new life; the net no longer breaks as of old: while they work he provides for them. Now they are "children" (ver. 5). He invites them to provide, for poverty is the best guarantee of divine provision.
- (c) There is change from depression to hopeful activity. In the failure of the night he teaches the unsatisfyingness of all but himself, and makes us feel the limitation of all human things. While they said "No," when they knew not who he was, they are encouraged when they recognize him as their Lord and Master, and yet their well-known friend: "It is the Lord."

II.—*"When the morning was now come."*

- (a) "When the day was even now breaking" (Gk.). The night is long—seems very long—on the dark sea of life's burden and worry (Apoc. xvii. 1, 15). Sometimes we grow impatient under apparent unsuccess, and, like Peter, thinking only of ourselves, would jump out of the boat in order to reach the land speedily. Yet it was not he who brought in the fish, and it is not said that he was fed any sooner than the others. How unlike to S. Paul: "Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you"!
- (b) "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." The first thing which greets them is the voice of Jesus himself. Well! He has been there all the time, encouraging through the night. They had taken their tone rather from the troubled sea than from him whom they had heard say, "Peace, be still."
- (c) And the 153 are safely landed, the work of a lifetime. The Master has looked to that, although until we were only 200 cubits from the shore we thought not that he was with us. Picture the surprises of eternity. What! *that* fish! Nothing more surprising than to find ourselves there.

III.—*"Jesus stood on the shore."*

- (a) In the Ascension he stands on the firm shore, who when on earth had made the restless sea firm to his feet. He bids us estimate life from that standpoint. It will be the same Jesus whom we have known here. Oh! the joy to recognize him, and to know that all the while that we were doubtful he was there, holding up the boat in the sevenfold (ver. 2) gifts of the Spirit's union.
- (b) The night is dark: we look out from the restless sea to the shore of eternity, and yet we experience the darkness. The Ascension corrects despair, alleviates depression, but it does not deny present experience, for he has experienced it. But the normal state for the Christian is confidence in him who sitteth above the water-floods.
- (c) Finally he bids them "Come and dine": "breakfast," we should read. Secure on the eternal shore from daily toil he calls us to himself in the Blessed Eucharist, that anticipation of the great breakfast which will be the dawning of the day that knows no ending, that preparation for the true day with its life and work.

The High Priest in the Holy of Holies

SATURDAY AFTER ASCENSION

"Which was a figure for the time then present."—Heb. ix. 9.

Picture: the anxious congregation waiting while the high priest was in the Holy of Holies.

Pray: for blessings in my Communions.

I.—*The people's anxiety.*

- (a) The congregation waited in deep anxiety that the high priest die not in the holy place (Lev. xvi. 13). They feared a ceremonial inexactitude or material impurity. The material has given place to the spiritual; but literal obedience and purity of intention are none the less elements of our anxiety when a human mediator has given place to the divine. But it is for ourselves that we fear, not for the High Priest.
- (b) This fear has its due place in the present dispensation; but it is often very un-Christian in character. We give more heed to it than to him who makes an atonement for us upon the mercy-seat. The Jewish congregation thought only of the high priest: is our High Priest deserving of less regard, because his presence in the Holy Place cannot fail? Let the knowledge of my unworthiness be a great stimulus to regard his office more intently.
- (c) And the anxious crowd was moved by one impulse. All hearts were full of the mystery of the expiation which had been offered, and they were assisting at the completion of the divine atonement. Does not this illumine our last reflection? We cannot get away from the fears of our own unreality until the whole heart is fixed upon that atoning verity consummated in the Ascension, and on which the Church lives.

II.—*The waiting congregation.*

- (a) Some parallel between the waiting congregation of Israel and the disciples during those ten days; but only in a sense of incompleteness, not of anxiety. For behind his entry into the Holy Place lay the reality and not the type of atonement. And his entry was that of the true High Priest into the real Holy of Holies. They grasped this, and knew that it was not the whole which they had as yet received. They waited expectantly.
- (b) The return of the high priest completed the ceremonies of the day. For the disciples the return of the High Priest was in Pentecost with its gift of the Holy Spirit, fruits of the atonement bestowed upon those who have received the atonement.
- (c) Pass in thought to the joy of the great future when the High Priest will return in visible presence to his waiting Church; and mark the attitude of the Church now. Not without a high priest, but with the High Priest ever in the presence of God, pouring out the riches of spiritual reality from the divine presence, in preparation of his Church for her share in his throne.

III.—*The Holy of Holies.*

- (a) The Christian Church has thus a continual Day of Atonement. The high priest of old entered into the Holy of Holies and then departed from it; but now he has entered in the completion of the spiritualizing of his risen body into the true Holy of Holies, although he fills all things; and never departs from it, although he fills his Body the Church.
- (b) The Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is our present realization of this truth. Herein he brings us into the Holy of Holies, the true presence of God, by condescending to us; and by his gifts he makes us meet to be partakers of heavenly bounties. What in symbol was once done for Israel in the year's cycle, is now in reality done within us day by day.
- (c) At the climax of that day the high priest returned to his people to bless them with the atoning benediction. As all spiritual blessings come to us from his atonement, so too the gifts of the Blessed Sacrament are also applications of this greatest gift to the true congregation of Israel. For us heaven can never be dissociated from Calvary, nor Calvary from heaven.

Waiting

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY

"Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem."—S. Luke xxiv. 49.

Picture: the maturing of the apostles during the fifty days.

Resolve: to spend more of my devotional time in quietness.

I.—*Waiting to assimilate.*

- (a) These fifty days were of vital importance to the disciples. For a period they had been receiving more instruction than they could profit from at the moment. Then came the epoch-making crisis of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. The forty days were another period of advancing revelation; and now the Ascension. How could they go on without the forty days, and now the ten?
- (b) Divine revelation always requires periods of assimilation. One cannot rush the Spirit's work. What he does within us has to have time to be absorbed spiritually, whether it be in sacramental gifts, in opening the heart to receive the truth of the gospel, or in the personal revelations of duty and life.
- (c) Herein lies one value of the Church's seasons. At each holy season we are bidden pause to learn the things concerning the kingdom of God. As they recur each year we are to learn more. Festivals, often regarded as times merely of rejoicing in the hearty services, should be preceded by preparation, and followed by an octave of instruction and absorption.

II.—*Waiting to receive.*

- (a) The last ten of these fifty days were especially a waiting to receive. They were to be ready for the coming of the Holy Ghost. It was a period in which they were to do nothing; a retreat. Often one is so busy in active work, or in reciting offices, saying prayers and making intercessions, that one leaves no time for God to speak, and is never waiting to receive.
- (b) Almighty God has never exhausted his gifts: he is only waiting until he can give more, and each gift is a promise of the Spirit. To learn his lessons by waiting on him in devout simplicity is higher than any demand of further blessing, which latter may well have in it something of spiritual self-satisfaction.
- (c) Consider, therefore, carefully one's use of devotional time, whether it is not too much occupied with active exercises, rather than with examination of one's faith in the mysteries of revelation, and in contemplation of the revelation of the Blessed Sacrament, and the amazing love of God, and of the lessons which he has to teach from the experience and events of one's life, or occupied with beholding the fair beauty of the Lord.

III.—*Periods of waiting.*

- (a) Life is not all crises: and the long periods of placid experience have their immense value for assimilation and preparation. Do not be on the look-out to mark progress by definite experiences, but trust in the Lord. He does not merely visit at crises; he is present in the calm as much as in the storm. There is temptation to regard the waiting periods as merely lost time.
- (b) Christian life should always have something about it of the character of the ten days: life is never really stationary. One is always waiting for the promise of the Father; waiting, and not impatiently; for the promise, on which one is learning to lean; made by the Father whom one is getting to know. Give great heed to acquire that fear whereby one may lack no manner of thing that is good.
- (c) For the Christian on earth lives in the truth of the Ascension; and only in the first-fruits of the Spirit (Rom. viii. 23). He lives in the formative stage of the Church. His life is dependent on a past used so as to become a preparation for a future yet hidden, even as Pentecost was hidden from the disciples during their period of waiting.

Thou hast asked a Hard Thing

MONDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY

"*Thou hast asked a hard thing.*"—2 Kings ii. 10.

Picture: the ascension of Elijah.

Pray: for spiritual growth.

I.—*The request and its answer.*

- (a) A double portion of Elijah's spirit. Elisha had been invited to make request; he asked in the right spirit, as the prophet's son, for the portion of the first-born. What did Elijah expect him to ask? A favour of the king? I do not think he so understood Elisha. No doubt he expected some such request as befitted his prophetic office, but he would have Elisha make it. We must ask according to the character of the donor.
- (b) But it was a hard thing, because spiritual gifts require spiritual qualifications. Compare with this the request of James and John for the right and left hand seats. But the request was not too bold: Elijah did not reject it. No request is too bold which is made in a right spirit, based on an existing relationship. Do not fear to ask too much.
- (c) "Nevertheless, if thou seest me," etc. The gift was dependent on the spiritual sight of Elisha; and he saw the chariots of Israel. The vision of the unseen was interpreted to him in the language of his day, and the limits of his experience. God was to Elisha the God of Israel's hosts: the fire was the emblem of his consuming holiness as at Sinai; and he saw therein the inner power of Elijah's storm-tossed life, as only a disciple could have seen it. The condition was fulfilled; Elisha pierced through the semblance of things into the spiritual forces which ruled them.

II.—*Elijah and Elisha.*

- (a) First called some years ago in a quiet way, Elisha had responded heartily. Compare the call of the first apostles: how far off their call seems to be from the Pentecostal life! but they had made a hearty response, and between lay the vision of the Ascension, as Elijah's ascension preceded the power of Elisha's life.
- (b) Then fellowship: the two had lived together. Elijah was no common type of man for Elisha to follow, and the loyal manner of his following may be seen from this last scene: "I will not leave thee." Mark how these two servants of God seem between them to express something of the character of him who is greater than both of them.
- (c) It is this last scene which arrests us at Ascension-tide: the power to see heaven opened, and while still on earth to realize the oneness of the two spheres. It is illustrated by Elisha's prayer for his servant at a later time (2 Kings vi. 17). The man of God who can see such a vision of the reality of life has indeed received the double portion.

III.—*The vision of the Ascension.*

- (a) What is it if it be not what this scene brings to our minds? Humanity has pierced into heaven: earth and heaven are one. The vision of the Church as the heavenly kingdom, and of us sons as in the region of the heavenlies, with all its powers and fellowship. And earth is God's footstool.
- (b) The vision varies from age to age: now a ladder, now the chariots, now the seraphim, now the revolving wheels, now the Son of Man standing, now the vision of S. John in Patmos. But it is all one; the interpretation is for those who can see; but no words can describe to another what he lacks power to realize.
- (c) But it is a hard thing; let no one think otherwise. The Ascension is no aspiration or inspiration to the earth-bound. Elisha's vision did not commence his discipleship; it rewarded it, and prepared it for greater things. We, too, must follow our Elijah from stage to stage, waiting upon him, and must bid high, refusing to be put off by "Go back again; for what have I done unto thee?" when he throws his mantle over us. It must be, "I will not leave thee."

The Ascent of Elijah

TUESDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY

"He saw him no more. . . . Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"—2 Kings ii. 12, 14.

Picture: Elisha smiting the waters with the mantle of Elijah.

Pray: for the divine power to be realized in some detail of one's life.

I.—*Some features of Elijah's ascension.*

- (a) Once the Spirit of God had not been in the whirlwind; now the whirlwind lifted him up into heaven. It was a fitting ascension for the strenuous prophet, and one that marked the transformation of character by grace, not the mere loss of what was strongest and best. God was dealing with Elijah, and not with the mere semblance of a man who had lost his individuality in his office. Do not strive not to be yourself, but strive to be directed by God's Holy Spirit through surrender to him.
- (b) So, too, the chariot and horses of fire befit the rugged prophet who had called down fire from heaven and raced by the chariot of Ahab. Religious experience is relative to the individual; and that religion is truest which is most characteristic of the man, and least imitative.
- (c) In these circumstances, mark the divine respect for the individual, and the secret of a holy life. Elijah had faced the reality of the spiritual throughout life, and through the events of his life Almighty God was forming the conditions of his ascension into the spiritual world. It is easy to criticize Elijah: the judgment of God is seen in the manner of his passing.

II.—*"He saw him no more."*

- (a) It was with a sense of loss that Elisha saw his master withdrawn from him; "Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace." A greater than Elijah has ascended also in a manner suited to his manifested life on earth, who was carried up in the midst of his disciples, and while blessing them. But his disciples returned with great joy, although they, too, had known their Master after the flesh. But they had known him otherwise also. Do I thus know him?
- (b) Elijah had not so much to give his disciples as had he of whom Elijah was a feeble type; and yet Elisha had learned from him the lesson of his life. He protested against a vain search for his body, grasping even in that dim age that the material is the veil which manifests while it hides the real. Every truly spiritual life like Elijah's reveals the spiritual to others.
- (c) Elisha had won his right to grasp the great fact of spiritual reality, as alone it can be won, by solid truth in the struggle of life fought out in faithful service and steady perseverance. Elijah, at the last, had seemed as though he desired to shake him off, as of old he had said, "Go back again; for what have I done unto thee?"

III.—*"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"*

- (a) Here was the reward of Elisha's years of service found in the vantage-ground for further service. The mantle was Elijah's legacy, the same mantle wherewith he had first called his servant. It speaks to us of the continuity of life's experience, and its development. Elisha had tested that mantle, and now he knew how to use it. Out of the experience of the past he was able to call upon the God of Elijah, for to him he was a reality. And the power is always there for such an one.
- (b) Our Master has left his mantle behind him, bequeathed to his disciples on whom he breathed the Holy Ghost and gave them power. Like Elisha, put that power to the proof, by doing what our Elijah has done in his days of the flesh, and smite in his name the waters of opposition and impediment, that some day you may acquire the right to smite with it the waters of the dividing Jordan.
- (c) The mantle was the symbol which conveyed the spiritual, the bequeathal of the sacramental power to the living Church. Years ago we first received it; later on some vision of spiritual reality has brought us to recognize its power more fully. Now seize, and fear not to use it boldly.

The High Priest

WEDNESDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY

"*A priest for ever.*"—Heb. v. 6.

Picture: the high priest on the Day of Atonement in the Holy of Holies with the blood of the sacrifice.

Pray: for a constant realization of Christ's priestly power.

I.—*Based on the Resurrection.*

- (a) The essential aspect of sacrifice is life and not death, both in the heathen and Jewish systems. To the heathen it was mainly the fellowship of the life-blood communicated to the worshipper; to the Jew it was the life set free. A double symbolism was required on the Day of Atonement; the one goat was sacrificed that its blood might atone; the other carried away the sins of the people into the wilderness. But always it was "the blood which is the life thereof" (Lev. xvii. 11; Deut. xii. 23).
- (b) The life to be availing for others must be poured out by death, shed and still living: the Resurrection is the life through death, so that he enters living, who hath died for us, into the Holy of Holies with his life-giving blood. The seed provides a natural analogy: before the life that is in it can spring forth and produce life, it must die to itself.
- (c) The Ascension therefore completes the atonement: it is the entry into the Holy of Holies (Heb. ix. 11, 12, 24). His death and resurrection have constituted him our High Priest, in which capacity he ever lives in heaven as our High Priest (Heb. v. 1-6).

II.—*The high priest as mediator.*

- (a) Mediation, intercession, is wider than prayer: it requires that "the priest shall make an atonement for him." It requires a basis, and includes an office. This intercession of our High Priest is based on his atonement, and includes the preservation of the new covenant.
- (b) So "he ever liveth to make intercession for us." His presence is the intercession; the presence of him in his human nature in which he has redeemed and embraced mankind. The victim is the Priest. The intercession is ever victorious: "He sitteth at the right hand of God": yet too it is intercession which is moved with a feeling of our infirmity; it pleads; S. Stephen saw him *standing*.
- (c) The intercession includes the presence in him of the redeemed race. In this respect he is also the Forerunner (Heb. vi. 20). This cycle of truths is the verity of the Christian's Eucharist, whether as sacrifice, worship, or sacramental food. It is all in the sphere of the heavenlies, and Christ is himself the Priest, Victim, and Food. It explains likewise the character and power of Christian intercession.

III.—*The high priest as the giver of blessing.*

- (a) It was foreshadowed under the Jewish dispensation (Numb. vi. 22 ff.). It was manifested to us in the vision of the Ascension: "It came to pass, while he blessed them he was . . . carried up into heaven" (S. Luke xxiv. 51). This is the peace of God. And "He shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts i. 11).
- (b) All benediction is the disposal, through the extension of Christ's priestly office, of that blessing which he has obtained for us by reuniting us to God in himself, and re consecrating creation to his service. The power of blessing, as of absolution, inherent in all Christians, and officially in those who share his priesthood, is an application of that peace of God which he has wrought for us in his priestly ministration.
- (c) There is a reciprocal office. God blesses us, and we bless God. But what difference! When we bless God, we praise him for some attribute or action of his, as, "Blessed be thy glorious Name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise" (Neh. ix. 5); but when he blesses us it is a revelation of his will to us and a consequent pledge of his favour and assistance. Let not us, who have the blessing of the Christian, be behind the Jewish psalmist: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Ps. ciii. 2).

Ascension Gifts

OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION

"*Thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men*" (margin in A.V., "*in the man*").—Ps. lxxviii. 18.

Picture: the conquering general entering his capital: in the procession are captive bands of the conquered people.

Resolve: to make more use of Christian fellowship.

I.—*The picture.*

- (a) Literally: an old-world military triumph; the captive bands enhance the conqueror's glory. The scene takes one back to primitive warfare, its brutal slaughter, and the carrying off of the women and of men slaves. We hear the old song of Deborah: "Have they not sped? Have they not divided the prey, to every man a damsel or two?"
- (b) In the psalmist it is a type of the bringing up of the ark to Mount Zion; the procession is a devout company of worshippers. But the poet's imagination does not end with the parallel between his own days and those of David. He sees God marching forth with his hosts from Egypt, through the wilderness (ver. 7); Sinai prepares for Zion (ver. 8; cp. 17); the women sing his praises (ver. 11, R.V.; cp. Judg. v. 28-30; 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7); and now he has entered his city (ver. 18).
- (c) To us it is the Ascension of the conquering King. Zion is heaven, and he enters not alone, but in company with the mighty army of his vanquished foes, who are now his obedient slaves. The gifts are the Pentecostal blessings. This is a Whit-Sunday psalm.

II.—"*Thou hast led captivity captive.*"

- (a) Literally, it is a Hebraic expression for a large captivity, as see the margin of Eph. iv. 8. Notice that captivity is a collective word: Christ's captivity is a Church. At this season faith will not stagger at the conviction that the captivity will be an army which no man can number, out of every nation, and from every age.
- (b) But the psalm gives some ground for the interpretation that he has taken captive what was previously a captivity in Egypt. It is true that before we were God's captives of the Christian Church we were captives to sin and Satan. It is for freedom that we are taken; but taken by a rescue or redemption from slavery.
- (c) Some take the words to mean, "Thou hast led captive those who formerly held us captive." This is perhaps in S. Paul's mind, for, after quoting the psalm, he speaks of Christ's descent into the lower parts of the earth, which may mean Hades, where he took captive hell and death (Eph. iv. 8-10).

III.—"*And received gifts for men.*"

- (a) In the psalm the thought is of taking tribute from the captives. The right translation is in the R.V., "Thou hast received gifts among men." And certainly the victorious King demands the gifts of all our powers and energy and of our possessions too. He claims us and all that we have.
- (b) But the Hebrew literally translated is, "Thou hast received gifts in the man." This gives a thought which well prepares for S. Paul's rather startling modification. In the Incarnation Jesus Christ took tribute of humanity, assuming to himself our nature with all its gifts and powers.
- (c) S. Paul, in view of the Incarnation, changes the words to, "And gave gifts unto men" (Eph. iv. 8), and goes on after the brackets to say, "And he gave some apostles and some prophets," etc. (ver. 11). The ascended Christ, having in his Incarnation taken tribute of man, now distributes his spoils to the captives, and these gifts are men. Think highly of God's gift in Christian fellowship.

Waiting for His Coming

FRIDAY IN WEEK AFTER ASCENSION DAY

"The end of all things is at hand."—1 S. Pet. iv. 7.

Picture: S. Peter in the days of persecution at Rome, realizing that these were the last days.

Resolve: "Be sober and watch unto prayer."

I.—*The Sunday after Ascension.*

- (a) The epistle is perhaps suggested by the fact that to the apostles these words were true during the ten days. The Ascension marked the end of the old—the visible intercourse, and Pentecost was the beginning of the new—the spiritual, the life of power. It is universally true that with Pentecost we enter upon the new stage of the world's education.
- (b) Or suggested perhaps by the thought of the apostles watching in prayer during these days, and in relation to the thought of the Ascension as leading to that of the Second Advent. As they prepared by a novena for the descent of Christ at Pentecost in his Spirit, so should Christians live in preparation for the coming of Christ.
- (c) The words remind us of the character of the Christian age; in this age he is exalting us through the Holy Spirit to the same place whither he is gone before; and he is nigh, even at the door. The end of all things is at hand; we live in the dawn of the eternal, in the birth-throes of the Church.

II.—*The end is at hand.*

- (a) The date of the epistle is uncertain; some place is not long before the fire of Rome, others at the very least ten years later. But the circumstances of the epistle are clear: persecution for the Name has commenced, but is not yet a permanent policy; S. Peter believes that it will cease, overcome by the goodness of Christian character. And yet he felt in the conditions of the age the approach of the end.
- (b) What would he have thought of a continuance of the age until opposition gave way through the exhaustion of failure, and a worse danger than persecution had succeeded to it, the danger of toleration through indifference? It is indeed only the form of opposition which changes. But while persecution is the opposition meted out to force and life, tolerance and indifference are opposed to ineffectualness and decay.
- (c) But the fact is that whether in the days of persecution or at an earlier decade, both S. Paul and S. Peter were impressed by the sense of the imminence of Christ. And this certainly is one valuable lesson of the Ascension. The Church is to be the waiting Church, preparing for her Lord's return, and constantly expecting it, not in feverish excitement, but in the desire of faith.

III.—*The end.*

- (a) One great lesson of the Ascension must be to distinguish between the things which have an end and those which have not. The Ascension rudely contradicts the conclusions of the material estimate of life. It places prayer and faith, hope and love, on an abiding basis, and pronounces the things which are seen to be temporal. Therefore be sober and watch unto prayer, and above all things have charity.
- (b) The revelation is not merely of the transitory character of the material, that kingdoms rise and wane, that the human clothing of truth requires continual modification, or that time is a succession. It is the revelation of the end of all things; that time itself will pass, that every resting in what is short of the eternal, however abiding it seem, will in the end be exhausted.
- (c) But we ourselves do not pass away. The Ascension of our Lord bids us learn that human nature abides. But the human nature which abides is taken up into the Godhead: not isolated humanity, but human nature redeemed, and replete with the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life, whom the Son sends from the Father.

Waiting for the Promise

WHITSUN EVE

"Wait for the promise of the Father."—Acts i. 4.

Picture: the company of the Eleven with the Holy Mother and the brethren of the Lord waiting through their novena.

Pray: against impatience both in material and spiritual matters.

I.—*"Of the Father."*

- (a) *Father* is characteristic of the Christian revelation. What Jesus Christ has taught his disciples hitherto, he now uses as the basis of his new lesson. We must assimilate the spiritual lessons of life day by day.
- (b) The word is a significant guarantee of the particular character of the promise: it was to be one rich in the Father's blessing. Consider how often in the trials of the apostles' lives, which lay beyond Pentecost, they would need to remind themselves that all their experiences were really part of the Father's blessing. They learned in the trials the discipline of sons.
- (c) Consider that this promise of the Father was the gift of the Holy Ghost. In response to his gifts, wherein we grow in grace, we realize the heavenly Fatherhood. It is through the Holy Spirit that we have faith in, confidence towards, and love of Almighty God.

II.—*"Promise."*

- (a) A promise is a pledge, and implies futurity. The fulfilment may be altogether in the future, or the promise may be for the continuance of a present gift. All God's gifts are promises: they are not like temporal gifts, to be used and exhausted. All God's promises are gifts; the future fulfilment is pledged upon the present gift which is the preparation of us for the further fulfilment.
- (b) A promise is a pledge of good. The Father's promise of the Spirit must be that under his guidance all things are both ordered for our good and can be so received as to work out for our good. The Holy Spirit is not given to enable us to bear up under the inevitable, but so to receive the fruitfulness of the Father's dealings with us that no event of life is to be to us the inevitable, but the good hand of our God upon us.
- (c) Every promise is conditional. A material promise is contingent upon power to fulfil it. God's promises are spiritual and are dependent for their fulfilment to any one of us upon his capacity to receive the gifts. But it is the Holy Spirit who prepares the heart for these progressive fulfilments, and so the first fulfilment of the promise was the abiding gift of the Sanctifier.

III.—*"Wait for."*

- (a) All God's gifts must be waited for. They do not come of impatience and fretfulness. We must wait to digest spiritual truth. A good Communion may be greatly diminished in its fruits by hurry. And we must wait too for the manifestation of God's will, not anticipating him in our natural ardour. He who trusts the Father's promise will learn to wait.
- (b) To "*wait for*" implies this confidence in Almighty God. It is not just to "keep on" in blind despair, but to "keep on" in cheerfulness of spirit, to preserve a good heart. The Holy Spirit is the Paraclete, *i.e.* the Invigorator, the Encourager, the one who puts heart into us. This waiting for, in the power of the Holy Ghost, is a development of Christian character in a strength not one's own, enabling the disciple to look forward, to be weaned from self and to fix the heart upon God.
- (c) And we still wait in Jerusalem below in certain expectation of the rich promises of the great Pentecostal ingathering. It is of the Holy Spirit that we do not cast away the great hope of eternal life, because the present life is very present. And others wait beyond the veil for the consummation of the promise, and to them also the promise of the Father is being fulfilled progressively.

The Gift of Tongues

WHITSUN DAY

"And began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."—Acts ii. 4.

Picture: the preaching of the apostles on the day of Pentecost to the assembled multitudes.

Pray: to believe intensely in the Holy Ghost.

I.—*The gift was in harmony with the giver.*

- (a) It was an intellectual gift. In the early days there was a gift of tongues, which required a gift of interpretation (1 Cor. xii. 28-30) to make it rational (1 Cor. xiv. 14, 18, 19). On this day the Holy Spirit combined the gifts (Acts ii. 4-8), thus signifying that he is the inspirer and illuminator of the newly founded Church, whose message to mankind is to be intelligible. In this he was applying to the new society the office which he has always ministered to the human intelligence.
- (b) It was a social gift. Language is the means of communication and fellowship between men, and a common language draws men together. In truest sense all Christians speak a common language as from heart to heart, and it knits men together through "the fellowship of the Holy Ghost." "The unity of the Spirit" is illustrated the more fully by the diversity of gifts appealing to many nations, which binds diverse men in one society.
- (c) It was a spiritual gift. Its purpose was the spreading abroad "the wonderful works of God": it brought no material benefit to the apostles, but rather they were accused of drunkenness. In the early Church the gift of tongues was sometimes degraded to minister to self-importance. Many of God's gifts are now similarly abused, so that the world does not see the full witness to the truth that the Holy Ghost is the inspirer of the Church, and that all natural endowments are spiritual gifts to be spiritually used.

II.—*The gift was suited to the occasion.*

- (a) It was a striking witness to the birthday of the Christian society. Consider the spiritual miracle which has transformed the face of human society in the growth of the Church, leavening the manners of the world even where it has not converted it. A striking manifestation was becoming to her inauguration. Now contrast the silence of the birth of Christ.
- (b) It was appropriate to the event. The Holy Ghost so manifested himself in the introduction of the Church to the world as her vital power. No organization, guild or corporation, but a divine institution, divinely held together, divinely working. "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church."
- (c) It was significant of the great fruit of the gift, the breaking down in each age of the barriers which separate men—national, intellectual, social. The Holy Ghost is the great leveller, not by human revolution, but by leavening the heart, not by sacrifice of truth, but by entering into the truth.

III.—*The gift was illustrative of the history of the Church.*

- (a) In its catholicity. All present heard the praises in variety of language: "All nations shall praise him." It struck the note of universal missions: "Out of every nation under heaven." Where the Holy Ghost works in pentecostal power, there the zeal of Christians goes out into the whole world.
- (b) In its mission. The first work of the Church is to preach. She should think less of nursing herself in Jerusalem, and more of the use of the gift of tongues for reaching through human influence those whom God significantly gathered round her on that day. The world asks the Church "What meaneth this?" (ver. 12); and the Holy Ghost is with her to answer the question.
- (c) In its duration. In the early days language was not much needed: now the full importance of manifold tongues is amply realized; and herein we perceive a new interest in the gift. It was a divine promise of blessing on the labours of student and missionary in the study of languages for theological or mission work.

Another Paraclete

MONDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK

“*Another Comforter*” (“*or Advocate, or Helper.*” *Gk. Paraclete. R.V. marg.*).—S. John xiv. 16.

Picture: an advocate in his twofold office (see § I. b and c).

Pray: to realize the strength of grace.

I.—“*Another.*”

- (a) Our blessed Lord, then, is also a Paraclete. And so the Holy Spirit is he whom the Son has sent to continue his mission to us under its changed and extended conditions. Consider that what he was on earth to his disciples that is he to us also through the Spirit.
- (b) Once elsewhere the Son is called Paraclete. “We have an advocate with the Father” (1 S. John ii. 1): Advocate, Paraclete, are the same word in two languages; it is one who is “called to the side of” another to defend him and plead his cause. The ascended Lord in his human nature advocates our cause before the Father against the accuser.
- (c) But the advocate had another office to fulfil towards his client; he must encourage and help him, put heart into him, lest he despair of his case. The Holy Spirit is thus the Paraclete at our side assuring us of the strength of our case as presented in heaven. His work is therefore not to be dissociated from that of the ascended Lord.

II.—*Comforter—Paraclete.*

- (a) The word “Comforter” is due to the late Latin verb *confortare*, which means “to strengthen much.” But do justice to the truth suggested to modern readers by the English word. Let not the robustness of health or the light-heartedness of prosperity blind one to the desperate need of comfort for many of our brethren in material or spiritual distress. Pray for them.
- (b) But Paraclete is more virile; the title suggests vigour. To invigorate and enhearten is the thought. Hope is of more stimulus than sympathy, new life than comfort. The English word lends support to the false notion that Christianity is suited to the passive endurance rather than the active assault of life. It is the Paraclete who has said, “I am come to cast fire on the earth.”
- (c) Learn therefrom an aggressive Christianity: there is to be defence as well as endurance, and attack as well as defence. Boldness is needed at least as much as patience, the manly virtues as well as the gentler ones. He came with the manifested sign of flame, leaping tongue-wise, and distributing itself. Our religion should be on fire.

III.—*Apply.*

- (a) To self. What have I to do with softness and supineness? The Paraclete betokens endurance, hardness, challenge. Why should I put up with the power of sin, as though no one were called to my side? It is his part to enable. A feeble personal religion is apostasy from the Holy Spirit. Why be content to be modestly in the background, to be apologetic Christians, when one should be pressing on?
- (b) To the Church. The festival is the trumpet-call to a forward Christian policy, an imperial and not a little-England Christianity. With the Paraclete the Church should venture. Apply such thoughts to foreign missions, and to the determination that the Church at home shall seize boldly all aspects of life and thought.
- (c) In all that in the Name of the two Paracletes the Church dares, or the individual, there is the Advocate above who embraces the Church in his own person, and whose ascended humanity is our victorious encouragement, and the Advocate within, the Sanctifier and Life-giver.

The Apostles before and after Pentecost

TUESDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK

"Power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."—Acts i. 8.

Picture: the apostles in council before dispersing on missionary work.

Resolve: to claim the power of the Holy Spirit.

I.—*Power.*

- (a) Before Pentecost the apostles were by no means devoid of grace. Particularly since the Resurrection the Lord had breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." But they still waited for that endowment of power which was to be their equipment for the development of the Church. They were to receive the power of the ascended Lord.
- (b) Much stress is often laid upon the value of a powerful character for Christian influence; and indeed it is as wrong as it is foolish to deny the natural gift of power merely because as a Christian one can see the danger of self-reliance and personal influence, and knows that natural power alone is insufficient.
- (c) And we may misinterpret the oft-repeated assurance of power as a chief mark of the gifts of the ascended Lord. We think rather of the power of conviction, of hope, faith, and love, and the power of prayer. These are, however, indirect. It is he to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth who is the giver of direct power to the individual. He supernaturally endows, and pre-eminently through the sacraments.

II.—*Illumined zeal.*

- (a) Thus the contrast between the apostles before and after Pentecost was not the result of the slow and steady progress in grace, such as is to be witnessed in the developing life of a devout Christian; it was due to the gift of the Holy Ghost, coming in the power of the ascended Lord, for which gift they had the faith and dependence upon God to wait.
- (b) Nor had they lacked zeal in earlier days, but they lacked illumined zeal, the zeal which is of the Holy Ghost and not merely of natural temper. The power with which they now spake proved irresistible, for it was of God. Or consider the contrast in zeal between Saul the persecutor and Paul the apostle.
- (c) Their grace of zeal was now a supernatural love of souls, and it marked its character by its accompanying conditions. It was no longer jealous, or jealous about the wrong things; it was a zeal of holiness and not merely of propaganda; and, too, it was a disciplined zeal with the great powers of endurance and self-restraint.

III.—*Unity.*

- (a) Where power and zeal are manifested as natural qualities, disunion results. The holding of truth should lead to unity as inevitably as falsehood leads to disunion. Opinion is self-assertive, but there is often the disunion of self-assertiveness within the fellowship of revealed truth, for the truth may be held as one's own and not as a revelation.
- (b) The apostles received the revelation of the truth, and in the power of the Holy Spirit they received also the spirit of unity which controlled the self-assertion of individualism. In their age it was realized that union is strength, for not even the Judaic Christians could divide S. Paul and the elder apostles, James and Peter. It was the united Church which won the greatest victories, and had power over persecution.
- (c) There are who boast that division is the proof of healthy life and stimulating rivalry. In the religion of Jesus Christ, love, which is of the Holy Ghost, is the stimulating rivalry; and that the unity of the truth is not destructive of healthy intellectual activity must be realized by all readers of the epistles. The true cause of disunion is natural character unrestrained by the Holy Ghost's power and sanctity.

The Pentecostal Power of the Church

WEDNESDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK

"We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God."—Acts ii. 11.

Picture: the crowd hearing the wonderful works of God.

Resolve: habitual prayer that the Church may not die of inanition.

I.—*The gift of tongues.*

- (a) Often thought that the apostles were endowed—at least for that day—with the gift of speaking diverse languages. But, even so, how could such a Babel be heard? No; it was not preaching in different languages, but ecstatic praises of God, which were heard. The "other tongues" (ver. 4) were one with the gift of tongues (1 Cor. xii. 10). Doubtless they all understood Peter's Aramaic sermon shortly afterwards.
- (b) Lifted up by the divine enthusiasm of the Holy Ghost, the disciples were carried beyond human speech in their inspired realization of God's glory. But unlike the gift elsewhere, where an interpreter was required (1 Cor. xiv. 13, 27, 28), there was here a special gift of hearing. Each listener understood what was being exultingly declared. The uniqueness of the occasion was marked by the uniqueness of the gift.
- (c) Frequently regarded as symbolic of the divine aid of languages in the evangelistic work of the Church. More truly an exposition of the divine will that the highest exercise of the spirit-inspired Church should be to praise God for his wonderful works. That gift is still ours, if we will use it. The gift of knowing languages was never given to the Church; for this purpose we have the divine gifts of intelligence and application.

II.—*"Every nation under heaven"* (ver. 5).

- (a) So it seemed to that generation. The day of Pentecost is the revelation of the propagation of the Church. This is its earliest note struck on the great feast. We speak of the marks of the Church; but how rarely is "extension" regarded as one of them! We speak of her catholicism, and do not make efforts to spread her life. Not so in those days; they believed that the first duty of the Church was to grow, and to this end they set to work.
- (b) We believe in the Church too much after the way of Jewish pride and exclusiveness. We hear much of what a Church cannot and must not do. If we really believed in the Church, as the vital force of the Holy Ghost, we should go forth and venture, regarding her extension as the response to grace. Not one of the apostles felt that he could not be spared from the central Church of Jerusalem; and the one who was left was allowed to become a martyr.
- (c) The extension of the Church is regarded as a voluntary duty. Confirmation candidates are taught the marks of the Church, but are not instructed in the first energies of the Holy Spirit. Parish priests rightly regard it their duty to instruct their people in the essentials of the faith, but they leave it to strangers—and once a year—to teach the primary duty of Church extension.

III.—*"Ye are straitened in yourselves."*

- (a) The day of Pentecost has often been called the Church's birthday. Perhaps better regarded as her Confirmation. She died and rose in Jesus Christ: that was her baptism. Now she was come to years of discretion. During the fifty days she had been growing up. Now she realizes that this promise is "to all that are afar off" (ver. 39).
- (b) The conditions were fulfilled: the Church had living witnesses of the personal Christ, convinced of his resurrection and of the forgiveness of sins; they believed in the Holy Ghost, and in the truth of the promise, and also that every man must be called of God (i. 21, 22; ii. 32, 33, 39).
- (c) There is a gospel of the Holy Ghost, and it is naught for us to boast of who have the sacraments, that outside are Christians who rival us in the first-fruits of the Spirit. "By their fruits ye shall know them." If the proof of the Holy Spirit were seen in an unparalleled devotion to the extension of the Church, we should have no need to assert the claims of Churchmen.

(For EMBER-TIDE MEDITATIONS, see pp. 485-496.)

The Sanctification of Natural Gifts

THURSDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK

"He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. . . . And he gave some apostles . . . for the edifying of the body of Christ."—Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12.

Picture: as on Thursday after the Ascension (No. 206).

Pray: for the sanctification of natural gifts.

I.—*The gifts of captive men.*

- (a) Once elsewhere S. Paul uses the same picture, but it is entirely misunderstood in the A.V. translation. "But thanks be unto God, who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ" (2 Cor. ii. 14, R.V.). S. Paul's glory is that he is not a free man, but God's captive, led about by God in his triumph of Christ, contributing to his glory.
- (b) There is a fearful parody of this bringing into captivity. There is such a thing as, instead of bringing every thought into captivity to him (2 Cor. x. 5), ourselves exerting effort to bring others into captivity not to him but to ourselves, bringing them under our own influence instead of under God's (2 Tim. iii. 6). This may even be done with a good intention, where personal influence is used apart from the grace of God and prayer.
- (c) This warning shows the conditions of the right use by men of God's gift of influence. It can only be exerted by one who is himself God's captive. Natural gifts given in tribute to God are bestowed back upon the captives to enhance his own glory. (See S. Matt. v. 16.)

II.—*"Some apostles . . . for the building up of the body of Christ."*

- (a) This gift is manifested in the sacramental system of the Church, dependent on the ministry of men. But the human agency in sacraments is in harmony with a wider scope of divine ministry. He works through men in his sacraments, because he has taken a blessed captivity from mankind, and because he himself works upon men.
- (b) The building up of the Body is, however, the work of all the members of the Church. The gift of men to men is exercised personally by the influence of sympathy, by the use in subjection to God of natural gifts, cleansed and consecrated, and by the pentecostal blessings, and by the example of holy lives and by prayers.
- (c) Appreciate the sanctity and the responsibility of natural gifts, as attractive manners, sympathy, a skilful hand, artistic faculties, physical excellency, intellectual power; and, considering what tremendous power of unconscious influence we are always exerting, pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

III.—*The gifts to the captivity are men.*

- (a) The gifts are men—not things; men with all their powers of intellect, will, character, emotion, affections. Whatever is mawkish, sentimental, cowardly (including intellectual cowardice), effeminate, silly, and the like, is not the gift of God to man, and will not be used by him to his glory.
- (b) The captivity is the Church, and the Church is the Body of Christ. Appreciate the fact that Christ ascended is the elevation of human nature to the throne of God. After the Ascension we cannot marvel that God's gift to men should be men in union with and in captivity to the ascended Jesus, the Son of God.
- (c) Learn the power of being joined to his captivity. In Christ the Church already reigns in heaven; in Christ each member of the captivity is already ascended. The gift of Christ is the gift of ascended men in the power of the ascended life.

The Cleansing Power of the Holy Spirit

FRIDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK

"What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."—Acts x. 15.

Picture: S. Peter's vision of the vessel descending from heaven.

Resolve: to seek the Holy Spirit against some prejudice or lack of faith.

I.—*The divine cleansing:*

- (a) Embrace the scope of redemption: here both the heathens and unclean foods are declared to have been cleansed. Appreciate the assurance: it is God's cleansing, and he declares himself satisfied with it. Who am I, that I should dare to call anything common or unclean which he says has been cleansed?
- (b) The work of the Holy Spirit is to bring this cleansing to us, by making us clean. "Now ye are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you," says Jesus Christ; but the disciples did not know the cleansing until the Holy Spirit was given; then in him the world was found to be cleansed to them.
- (c) And only in the Holy Spirit are all things clean to us. Many things are found by us in life not to be clean to us, because we do not approach them in the Holy Spirit. That nothing is clean to us apart from God, is the sad experience of our lives.

II.—*The case of S. Peter.*

- (a) Illuminated at Pentecost, he yet required further illumination. This was not because S. Peter was slow to learn the lessons of grace, but because the unfolding life of the Holy Spirit in us is a developing life, expanding in proportion to loyal response. We can never be independent of the Holy Spirit.
- (b) It will help to great reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit that he enabled S. Peter to receive the truth of the cleansing of the Gentiles. Consider this revelation in application to all human relationships, and learn in him not to think of any man as common or unclean, either in friendship or through despair.
- (c) And in him S. Peter lost the distinction between meats. But it was not until the Holy Spirit revealed it to him, that S. Peter allowed himself this liberty. Contrast with him the easy self-assurance with which the Corinthians enjoyed their knowledge, puffed up thereby.

III.—*The illumination of the Holy Spirit.*

- (a) Learn from this vision the work of the Holy Spirit within the heart, to bring home to us by degrees the revelation of the atonement. Not at once is it learnt, nor by one's self. We have yet much more to learn of it in application to ourselves, as well as in the extent of its range. He is to be within us the Spirit of Jesus, leading us into all truth, by taking of the things of Jesus and shewing them unto us.
- (b) There is need of great dependence upon him against the prejudice or narrowness of the illuminated conscience. If there be indeed this humble dependence upon him, it will check liberty from being degraded into licence. Very different is this broad and Christian outlook upon life from the tolerance engendered by indifference or mere geniality of temperament.
- (c) It is part of his work to bring home to us the truth of the cleansing of the Gentiles in the power of intercession, as in him we have courage to pray and to hope for the conversion of sinners and of the heathen. Herein he helpeth our infirmities. And in him too is the illumination of the heart in charity towards those whom we still deem unclean, because we do not see them in Christ the Redeemer.

(For EMBER-TIDE MEDITATIONS, see reference given on page 212.)

Quenching the Holy Spirit

SATURDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK

"Quench not the Spirit."—1 Thess. v. 19.

Picture: how a fire needs to be fed, and how it may be extinguished, or allowed by neglect to go out.

Pray: that you may respond actively to the Holy Spirit.

I.—*The Holy Ghost is the guide of life.*

- (a) He equips for life. He gives suitable gifts, both natural and spiritual, and he elevates the natural gifts into spiritual. Do not rest satisfied until your naturally good qualities are confirmed into spiritual graces. Do not despair of the gifts which you do not seem naturally to have: the Holy Spirit is above the natural: he can make the desert blossom as the rose.
- (b) He controls in life. We need much more the Holy Ghost to control us from the errors of natural impulse than to equip us with natural gifts which God has not given us. He has given us all that we need for his glory, when our powers are quickened and controlled by the Holy Ghost. The gift of tongues was a wonderful power on the day of Pentecost; it was a mischievous possession in the Church of Corinth.
- (c) He alone makes life fruitful. There is no fruit apart from him. What is not of him does not live unto eternal life, but is of temporal character. Knowledge is good, but knowledge apart from the Holy Spirit is not enduring. In heaven we shall not need to be learned; but the lessons which he has taught us through the discipline of learning, and the use which he has inspired us to make of it, will remain through eternity.

II.—*The Holy Ghost seeks a response*

- (a) To his love. It is in love that he comes forth to us: and he is love. In response we are to love him and to exercise his gifts in the spirit of love. To use natural gifts selfishly is to abuse his love, and to tend towards quenching him.
- (b) To his truth. He is the Spirit of truth, and is given to guide us into all truth. Truth is the right response to him, and includes love. Conceit as well as selfishness is fatal to truth, for both are false to him, to whom we owe what we are, and who has given his gifts to be used for others to the glory of God. We must respond to his truth by truth of life.
- (c) To his fellowship. We are to respond to this by keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This involves faithfulness to love and to truth. There cannot be unity without truth.

III.—*The Holy Ghost can be quenched.*

The simile here used by S. Paul is of the extinguishing of fire. We may put a fire out by water, or by giving it no draught or by neglecting to add fuel.

- (a) We may quench the Holy Ghost directly by grievous sins against him in his purity, or his love, or his truth. And this may be either by directly quenching him in ourselves, or by grieving him in others. When we sin against others by defect of Christian love towards them, it is the Holy Spirit against whom we sin.
- (b) We may quench him by lack of responsive exercise of his inspirations, by not stirring up the gift which is within us. All his gifts are for use. We must exercise ourselves to live as we pray, or we may find that our prayers are false. Let the Holy Spirit direct our prayers and our hearts also.
- (c) We may quench him by neglect. Make now an act of faith in him: see whether you pray habitually to him: ask yourself whether in your daily life you think of him, believe in grace, confess your sins against him, strive to honour him.

(FOR EMBER-TIDE MEDITATIONS, see reference given on page 212.)

The Blessed Trinity

TRINITY SUNDAY

"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."—S. Matt. xxviii. 19.

Picture: yourself with will, reason, and affection, only realizing your true life as these are brought by God into harmony and fellowship.

Resolve: to pay more careful heed to the understanding of the Christian faith.

I.—*The Holy Trinity.*

- (a) There is one God: two Gods are unthinkable. The Mohammedan asserts this, while the Jew proceeded through revelation to the truth that God is One. He alone absolutely is: he is simple and not composed of parts, or subject to change; nor is there in him the harmonizing of qualities. God exists: he is the one verity.
- (b) Nothing can exist without relationship; and in God that which is necessary to being is self-contained: he is the absolute. In the simplicity of God this relationship is the divine Being, and is necessarily personal. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost stand to one another in personal relationship.
- (c) Fellowship is the perfectness of the divine relationship within the Trinity; it is the divine nature and cannot be other than it is. When we consider this eternal fulness of the divine life, we may well marvel that it has pleased God to create us for the praise of his glory.

II.—*Fellowship with God.*

- (a) Thus seen in God, fellowship becomes a law of being. "In him we live and move and have our being." To creation and to fellow-man we stand necessarily in relationship, and creation is what it is because God is what he is. But with man relationship is fellowship, for the law of the universe is to him the moral law which governs his development and calls for active co-operation on his part.
- (b) The nearest approach to perfection for human nature lies in the realization of the fellowship which constitutes the divine conception embodied in the whole human race, and consecrated in the Church. The divine ideal cannot be realized in the individual man, but in the Church each member is offered a communion with the wholeness of the divine purpose.
- (c) We may consider therefore the category sin, death, selfishness, individualism, and the opposite category holiness, life, consecration, fellowship, salvation. "He that will lose his life for my sake shall find it." "None of us liveth to himself." Taken up into the divine life, man realizes this fellowship through dedication; that is, he consecrates his individuality by his own act.

III.—*God and man.*

- (a) In the revelation of Jesus Christ we may see that life of man of which the fellowship of the Blessed Trinity has led us to think. Considered devotionally, it is also equally true that his fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit was perfectly realized, and was inseparable from his fellowship with man. He alone has realized universal fellowship with man, who alone never lived unto himself, who alone could do so because in his human nature is no sin. He alone therefore could give his life for man.
- (b) Unlike Jesus Christ, each one of us has limited being. Man has a relative independence, separateness of personality, and this individuality is properly exercised in his making his dedication his own act, whereby he realizes himself in giving himself. He attains to his perfection as a self by surrendering self, and not by self-assertion. "Let him deny himself."
- (c) We may or we may not be able philosophically to understand a little about God, but the knowledge of God is the blessing which belongs to fellowship, as he reveals himself to those who live unto him. The fuller knowledge of God belongs to the beatific vision.

Reverence

MONDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY

"The four and twenty elders fall down . . . and worship him that liveth for ever and ever."—Apoc. iv. 10.

Picture : the heavenly scene.

Pray : for reverence.

I.—*Reverence.*

- (a) All reverence is the appreciation of worth: and reverence to Almighty God is so also. Reverence is not merely the expression of appreciation, which is courtesy; this may be there without anything behind it. But reverence involves the true appreciation and respect of worth; it is out of the heart.
- (b) Reverence is an essential to learning. In secular studies it is a condition of progress, and involves attention and carefulness and perseverance. All serious study is worthy of reverence. In spiritual education it is no less a condition of advance. Some would wait for a spirit of devoutness to make them reverent, demanding the reward before the conditions are fulfilled.
- (c) Reverence is a revelation of character. Some cannot reverence anything; some can reverence physical courage and skill, but nothing else. Some only intellectual strength; some reverence moral qualities, but not spiritual. Each limitation of reverence is a revelation of one's own deficiency.

II.—*Aspects of Godward reverence.*

- (a) There is a reverence of behaviour which is of the will, and is therefore true reverence. It manifests itself in speech, as well as in the conduct of prayer or worship. It is expressed in bodily deportment, and in concentration of the mind. It has its reward in the deepening of one's consciousness of what is due to Almighty God, and in the increasing sense of the true fear of God.
- (b) There is reverence of the intellect, to be cultivated by gravity and the sense of the responsibility of the understanding. Without it the mind is lifted up by pride and self-assurance or dissipated by flippancy, and either one does not cast one's crown before the throne, but is proud of it as one's own, or one is not careful to be before the throne.
- (c) There is reverence of character. Almighty God will not reveal himself to the selfish or unclean; nor yet to the careless who will not take the pains to seek him. It is not reverent to think that the Lord of heaven and earth is to be understood without attention, or that the spiritual can be appreciated without spiritual character.

III.—*Growth in reverence.*

- (a) One great truth of reverence has been taught by the writer of Job: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." A good repentance lays a good foundation of reverence.
- (b) It is a mark of growth in reverence when the spirit of modesty and the self-discipline of carefulness encourage the growth of this good beginning. Carelessness in one's rule of life and devotion, and slackness, which is irreverence, may cause the revelation once vouchsafed to become obscure. Not all doubt and spiritual difficulty are the reverence of truth; they may often be the result of an irreverence which is losing spiritual faculty.
- (c) Reverence to the Blessed Sacrament is especially an aid to the grasp of mystery. In the Blessed Sacrament all mystery meets, yet here mystery is most easily received, because of the gift of sacramental communion, and because the spirit of humility is capable of receiving the revelation of God.

The Theological Virtues

TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY

"Faith, hope, charity."—1 Cor. xiii. 13.

Picture: see Apoc. iv. 8.

Resolve: to emulate the faith of the saints.

I.—*Theological virtues.*

- (a) The saints have been convinced where we are uncertain. They know with a faith which cannot be shaken; indeed, to them the spiritual realities, which often seem speculative and vague to us, are the most true and certain of all things; while the world, which to us is so powerfully real, is to them manifestly temporary and unstable.
- (b) To many the mystery of the Blessed Trinity is one of the encumbrances with which Christianity is burdened. It is speculative, and they would have it dropped, or kept modestly in the background for those who are not disturbed by it. This frame of mind is virtually a denial of revelation: man by seeking is to find out God, and apparently to fathom him. But see what S. Paul says in 1 Cor ii. 9 ff.
- (c) The revelation, when made known, may be accepted; but it is only really received through the Spirit of God acting on the spirit of man. This may be philosophically unsatisfactory: but Christianity is not identical with philosophy; it is a life. We may appreciate, therefore, the insistence by S. Paul upon faith and its companions as theological virtues.

II.—*The exercise of the theological virtues.*

- (a) Faith is exercised in the presence of the unseen. It is eminently practical, and is strengthened by the experience which its use gives: and the reward of its exercise is the divine increase of faith. In relation to mystery the true exercise of faith is meditation, wherein the spiritual realities are appreciated: and the true exercise of faith in meditation is tested by action.
- (b) As faith acts upon the intellect, so hope upon the will. It, too, is a supernatural gift of God. And, as with all the gifts of God, it is for use. It is exercised in prayer, wherein it is also strengthened. But without faith hope is not: and faith is not active apart from hope. So, too, hope is tested by life.
- (c) Charity, or love, is the third of this trinity of grace. Its origin is in God, and it is vouchsafed through the bestowal of faith and hope; and the three are inseparable. Its supremest exercise is in divine worship, wherein faith and hope are raised in the union of intellect, will, and affection to the height of the self-surrender of the whole person. Apply these considerations to Eucharistic adoration in relation to the mystery of the Blessed Trinity.

III.—*Divine mystery and the saintly life.*

- (a) It is revealed that without holiness no man can see the Lord, and that "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Purity of heart, and holiness, express that relationship of man to God which is experienced in the self-surrender of life to his glory, who is realized supernaturally with the conviction of the whole being.
- (b) By faith, hope, and charity the Christian knows, desires, and loves God. Faith without meditation, prayer, and worship is, in relation to the revelation of Almighty God, a misuse of terms. And the exercises are unthinkable in the spiritual life apart from their fruits in sanctification and surrender to God. For the gift of supernatural virtues is a divine force, and the exercise of the gift is the human response of reception.
- (c) Thus to the saints the divine mysteries have been certain, not because they neglected their intellects, devoting themselves solely to piety, but because their reason was strengthened by supernatural gifts; and by correspondence to the divine character their whole persons were in harmony with the revelation which is not made to a fragment of one's being, but to one's personality.

The Blessed Sacrament and the Holy Trinity

WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY

"*The Spirit of the Lord filleth the world.*"—Wisd. i. 7.

Consider: that it should not surprise us to find in nature and in reason light upon the divine revelation.

Pray: for the faith which does not shrink from facing intellectual difficulty.

I.—*The mystery of the Blessed Trinity.*

- (a) Nature is full of mystery; life, and yet more the experience of our human life, is even more full of mystery. The human reason acknowledges mystery, and still asserts her supremacy: she reverently studies, and in no way acknowledges that mystery is opposed to reason. From what she can perceive of nature and of life's experience she argues confidently with regard to what lies beyond her, that it too is to be rationally explained. From time to time she is rewarded by further unveiling of the mystery.
- (b) If there were no mystery in the revelation of God it would be no revelation to us of the mystery of life and of our own being. In God is to be found ultimately the solution of all problems: from him all things proceed, to him they return (Rom. xi. 36). But the mystery of the Holy Trinity is not a theological irrationalism superimposed upon a simple deism: it is a revelation which brings our conception of God more into harmony with the mystery of created life.
- (c) In our own being we find likewise individuality and fellowship. I am I: and yet in the experience of every man it is true that no man liveth to himself. Moreover, in myself I find something which corresponds to the revelation of the Triune. I am: I know that I am: I delight in being and in my knowledge of my being (S. Aug., *De Civ. Dei*, xi. 26, 28).

II.—*The mystery of matter and spirit.*

- (a) In man they act and react: he is the living union of both. He cannot deny the material in himself, and yet he is spiritual, and still is when the material is destroyed, as also while it habitually changes. The material world is in hope of sharing in the liberty of redeemed humanity (Rom. viii. 20 ff.).
- (b) In the Incarnation man's nature is revealed to him, and light is further thrown upon God-created matter. The Word incarnate has united himself with matter. In the Resurrection a revelation has been made to us of the permanence of this union in man under conditions which illuminate matter and reveal it in fuller measure as the creation of God.
- (c) In the Blessed Sacrament is revealed, as an effect of the Incarnation, and in harmony with the constitution of man, a further disclosure. The Word of God, divinity and humanity, is vouchsafed to us under the species of material substances as his chosen means of communication. Matter is made God's minister for the highest ends, as indeed in all the course of nature.

III.—*Consider how in the Blessed Sacrament is a revelation of the Holy Trinity.* Cp. *Gloria in excelsis.*

- (a) The worship of the Father. Change the scene from earth to heaven, as we should always do at the altar, and all is clear. It is the High Priest offering before God the Father: in his mediatorial office he presents to the Father the perfection of the work which he gave him to do.
- (b) The worship is through Christ made man for us. The Blessed Sacrament of the Body broken and Blood outpoured is possible only through him who became man for us, and redeemed us and all creation through his death. Our boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies is through the living Way.
- (c) The worship is in the Holy Ghost, who fulfils here the office corresponding to that which is his in the mystery of the Incarnation: "The Holy Ghost shall overshadow thee."

In the Blessed Sacrament is fulfilled the obligation: "The Catholic Faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity."

His Delights with the Sons of Men

CORPUS CHRISTI

"And my delights were with the sons of men."—Prov. viii. 31.

Picture: Jesus Christ at the marriage feast in Cana.

Resolve: devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

I.—*Consider the Divine Word.*

- (a) Before the Incarnation he was eternally the unchangeable Wisdom of God, by whom creation was made and in whom it is sustained. "For his pleasure they are, and were created." His delights were already with the sons of men, for he is Mediator in creation as well as in redemption.
- (b) In the Incarnation his delights find fuller expression. Consider such scenes as the marriage in Cana, the home at Bethany, the fellowship with the Twelve, the blessing of little children, his life among the sick, his power of attracting sinners to himself.
- (c) The Ascension is an extension of this fellowship with the sons of men. What he was upon earth to those who saw him in the flesh, he is now to all who do not close their hearts to him. He has not ceased to delight himself in the sons of men; he has strengthened his delights by the redemption of man.

II.—*His delight is manifested in the Blessed Sacrament*

- (a) In its prodigality. He unites himself to us, he brings his burning devotion to our coldness and indifference; he submits himself even to sacrilegious communion. How much he must desire us, to submit to such affronts!
- (b) In his own accessibility. Not now is the Shekinah glory veiled in the unapproachable mystery of the Holy of Holies; no longer is he to be sought only in one Temple; but he presents himself at the humblest altar of the poorest church, under the veils of homely bread and common wine, at the word of any priest.
- (c) In his abasement. Not now even in human form does he approach us manifestly; but from heaven he descends to manifestation as inanimate, helpless, under the forms of lifeless matter. As a suppliant he craves the satisfactions of his delight, and places himself as it were at our mercy. And we can refuse him!

III.—*Consider how his delight should affect us.*

- (a) He communicates himself to us that he may satisfy his desire for us. This is a more profitable consideration than that of our desire for him, which at its highest is infinitely less than his desire for us. This desire for the sons of men should be a great incentive to the devout communicant.
- (b) Every communion is an increased experience of the love of God which passeth understanding. Whenever the Christian is in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament he adores the inexhaustible love of God and takes courage. But more, in every communion he participates in that love and increases his fellowship with him who seeks him, and who makes his highest good his chief desire.
- (c) In his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament the Christian desires to express his appreciation of this sublime desire, and to make reparation for its rejection by the sons of men. He knows how many are indifferent to it, even among those who would be offended if they were not called Christians. Here, too, the devout soul finds its secret fellowship with him, and is strengthened in his own desires for the sons of men that he may bring them to the true knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The Blessed Sacrament an Aid to Faith

FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY

"How can these things be?"—S. John iii. 9.

Picture: the perplexity of Nicodemus.

Resolve: more devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

I.—*The Gospel for Trinity Sunday.*

- (a) It contains no clear reference to the Blessed Trinity. We might have preferred another selection (*e.g.* S. John xiv. 16, or S. Matt. xxviii. 19). But the Gospel is well chosen, reminding us that divine mysteries require the Spirit of God for their interpretation. Trinity Sunday is on the octave of Whitsun Day, and we have prayed, "Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things."
- (b) It also shows us that the difficulty of dogma is not a reason for getting rid of it. Our Lord pressed the difficulties with Nicodemus, and left him to face them. So, too, in the conversation at Capernaum (S. John vi.) he did not explain away the difficulty, he forced it. Mystery exists, and it is no solution of it to deny it. Let the Church show the same patience in her possession of truth which he showed.
- (c) This week presents two great mysteries of life. The Blessed Trinity and the Holy Sacrament are not gratuitous inventions of Christian theology; they are divine revelations, illuminative of the mystery of being and life which all are aware of. Both doctrines are most unpopular, because men do not relate revelation with life. The former is regarded as abstruse and philosophical; the latter as superstitious. A feeble Christianity tries to be rid of both in the interests of compromise; it minimizes the former into a worn-out figure of speech, and the latter into a symbol.

II.—*The Blessed Sacrament an aid to faith.*

- (a) One benefit of Holy Communion is that it guides the intellect. The whole man is permeated by the gift of Jesus Christ, the divine Logos. Almighty God has guided many through the responsibility of facing life and revelation by their loyal adherence to grace. Others cut themselves off from grace when they are in difficulty, and wonder why they do not believe.
- (b) Another benefit of Holy Communion is to incline and strengthen the will. To believe makes demand upon the will. It is not the intellectual assent to a proposition, but active co-operation of being with that which the intellect receives.
- (c) The Blessed Sacrament sanctifies the spirit: it develops the power to perceive the spiritual. To Christians the spiritual is at least as real as the material: and this is the work of grace. We are at times unaccountably surprised that those who do not live by grace should find the spiritual so difficult of apprehension. Do we not often underestimate the fruits of communion by thinking almost exclusively of certain narrower graces?

III.—*The problem of spirit and matter.*

- (a) The Christian approaches the problem from the side of God's eternal existence. He who is the cause of all things can relate himself to his creation. The Christian finds an interpretation of the problem in the fact of his own being; the Incarnation and the Blessed Sacrament help him to interpret himself. He finds in himself spirit expressing itself through material form.
- (b) The natural mind approaches from the side of the divergence between spiritual and material; its difficulty is to harmonize the two. The Blessed Sacrament offers no illumination to him, for he denies its verity as unworthy. He does not appreciate either the condescension of God to the nature of man, or the harmony of the Blessed Sacrament with all life.
- (c) So he approaches the mystery of the Holy Trinity likewise from the other side. He starts from the conception of three human personalities, and finds it unthinkable. The Christian proceeds from the revelation of Jesus Christ, and thus begins from the conception of the One God and of Spirit. The Holy Trinity is thus not unthinkable, but a revelation which helps to interpret personality to him.

Jesus Christ dwelling among his own People

SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY

"I dwell among mine own people."—2 Kings iv. 13.

Picture: this great woman choosing rather to remain among her own neighbours than to be advanced to greater honour.

Consider: whether I cannot make an act of spiritual communion every day on which I do not communicate sacramentally.

I.—*Consider the sources of this woman's contentment, and apply.*

- (a) Her reply was not the exertion of a great resolution to sacrifice herself, but came out of the heart's content. She had thrown herself into her sphere of love and duty, and had found happiness. She had in consequence no restless ambitions, and she sought for no reward for her kindness to Elisha. Yet she had her sorrows, had she left herself any opportunity to think of them,—for she was childless.
- (b) It is the secret of a contented and happy life, to have forgotten one's self in living for those among whom we have been placed by God. Apply this to home, or to the household of which we are members. Here is the sphere for emulating this great woman. Only desire for self-expansion may unsettle us, or dwelling on our own sorrows: but we who have come to give up all for Christ have no room for such.
- (c) Apply yet more widely, as members of Christ's holy family in England. They are our own people, children of one God, sharers in one Food. To dwell among one's own people is the way to find the appreciation of Christian fellowship: love will make the best of them: self-surrender will realize that we receive infinitely more than we contribute. Shunem has been given to the people of God (Josh. xix. 18), and we must be on the spot when the Philistines gather together there (1 Sam. xxviii. 4).

II.—*Listen to God as he speaks the words to your heart.*

- (a) Mine own people. Brace up the heart by reminding yourself that, in spite of many failures, yourself—and we—are God's elect. He says, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." How the heart expands to God in response! How we are drawn out one to another in this family of God's people!
- (b) I dwell among them. It is the King amidst his people, and within them, "Here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein" (Ps. cxxxii. 14, 15, P.B.V.). Always accessible, always at their disposal. In the Incarnation this has been realized in the fullest measure. "I will write my laws within their hearts." "The kingdom of heaven is within you" (or "among you," S. Luke xvii. 21).
- (c) It is in the Blessed Sacrament that Christians realize the truth of this most fully. There he comes to us and to our brethren, and at the same time knits our hearts to one another in him. With what contentment should it fill us! There, indeed, he has again and again supplied the deficiency of our lives, even after we have said virtually, "Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid" (2 Kings iv. 16).

III.—*Hear these words as you kneel before the Blessed Sacrament.*

- (a) They are literally true. The highest heaven is brought down to our midst in accessibility, and we are lifted up into heaven in sacramental worship of praise and intercession. Let it ever stir up a correspondence of contentment and devotion. Strive not merely to hear Mass as a Christian duty, but to rise to its greatness, to unite yourself with it.
- (b) The fullest riches of this promise are to the life of the faithful communicant. He comes to them in fullest abundance, to supply all our needs, and to equip us for all the greatness of our vocation, and he comes to dwell, abide, in us and in our brethren, not for a moment, but with the power of an endless life.
- (c) Consider how you may increase your devotion to him in the Blessed Sacrament. The greatest devotion is that of a life sanctified by God. Next, stir up your devotion by acts of faith, acts of reparation for yourself (for cold communions, communion graces not well used, etc.) and for others who neglect this gift of God.

The Blessed Sacrament the Home of Rest

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Come unto me . . . for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."—S. Matt. xi. 28, 29.

Consider: these gracious words as they occur in the gospel; then hear them repeated to you by him from the altar.

Resolve: to seek rest in him there.

I.—*"Come unto me."*

- (a) Consider the character of our Lord's public ministry: his attractiveness, graciousness, accessibility, unweariedness, his love of man. Consider this as in spite of—or shall we say because of?—his knowledge of man's history, his weak will, his selfishness, his fickleness and instability. He invited men to himself who is strong, holy, and unchangeable.
- (b) Hear the words as addressed from the cross. What depths they reveal in his invitation! And what emphasis do they express upon the word "me"! Was ever other who dared thus invite the whole world to himself? Mark, too, that the invitation is to himself, not to a doctrine, nor to an act, but to himself as the substance of Christian dogma, and as revealed in his acts.
- (c) Now hear the words from the altar. It is his call to the labouring and heavy-laden, whether the burdened by over-work and anxiety, or the troubled and restless soul. Why do I not take my troubles and fears and needs to the Blessed Sacrament? Where shall we find relief if not in the Body of Christ?

II.—*"For I am meek and lowly in heart."*

- (a) Such he manifested himself to be in the Incarnation, in his life upon earth, and in his death. Such he offers to make us through the gift of the altar: such he proves himself to be in dealing patiently with us. Consider him in these various manifestations, and see how such an one attracts the weary and heavy-laden.
- (b) In the Blessed Sacrament peculiarly does he thus manifest himself, as he patiently submits himself to the medium of lifeless matter while the ages roll by; submits to the light treatment of the careless, the unprepared communicant, the communicant who does not live by this food of life; submits even to the cross-questioning and contempt of the ungodly, so long as his wearied ones need him.
- (c) What he is, that in the Blessed Sacrament he offers to make his people, if they will take his yoke upon them. Wonderful thought! The additional yoke upon the labouring and heavy-laden is to be the way of rest. The Christian understands this paradox of experience, and may know it still more by feeding on him who is meek and lowly. Humble and trustful dependence upon God is a great easing of one's burden.

III.—*Rest.*

- (a) Consider the rest of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Here upon earth he found none; now he has the blessed rest of victorious and fruitful work. In this risen victory he rests for us in the Holy Sacrament, sleeping while his heart waketh.
- (b) And we are to find rest in him there; to share in his victorious rest through communion with him. Bring all your troubles to him there and lay them on his altar, carrying him away with you with whom to meet all that the good God has in store for you, that it may work together for good with you.
- (c) Consider that in more than one way the holy altar is our rest. In being the life of communion with our Head it is also the place of prayer and of intercession, which is all-powerful in his name, and is the realization of the Church's fellowship. "If one member suffer all the members suffer with it." Bring hither all your troubles and offer them in union with his victorious sacrifice.

This Desire on the Eve of his Passion

FIRST MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."—S. Luke xxii. 15.

Picture: the last supper—the vigil of the crucifixion.

Resolve: to give the Blessed Sacrament a more important place in my life.

I.—*His desire is the true estimate.*

- (a) Frequently we measure divine things by a wrong standard; by our appreciation, and not by God's value. We do not understand the mystery of redemption, and often measure the cross by our own emotion. Yet he came into the world in order to die. Does not that give a standard of measurement? We regard the Holy Communion as we feel its help; but we should measure it by his desires.
- (b) See by these words what significance has attached to his previous breakings of bread. See in them how he was preparing his disciples for this abiding fruit of his Passion, as he prepared them for his Passion by gradual unfoldings.
- (c) It is not only that he came into the world to die and to make the fruit of his death an abiding power in his Church, but, further, that he looked to the establishment of this close fellowship with himself in mystical union as a personal desire, to be fulfilled in a bond nearer than that of master and servant. "Henceforth I call you friends."

II.—*His desire not quenched by his prospective knowledge*

- (a) Of the misuse which would be made of his gift through neglect, carelessness, and irreverence, unconsciously leading men to treat religion with contempt, when they evade his dying request. It is part indeed of the divine daring of love.
- (b) Of the misinterpretation of his desire. All was done so simply, with no explanation. He confidently left it to the unfolding of truth by the Holy Spirit in the Church, as he interprets the revelation of Calvary, Resurrection, and Ascension. Herein he reveals to us his confidence in the power of the Blessed Sacrament to interpret itself to his followers, regardless of the obstacles in the way of those who will not bring the minds of disciples to it. There is no question in the Blessed Sacrament of what is called miracle.
- (c) Of the blasphemy of the wicked. Indeed, herein he only repeats the history of his own person. They called him deceiver—perverter—wine-bibber—a worker through Beelzebub. Here, too, we must estimate as he estimates. The Blessed Sacrament has its triumphs as the cross has, and they are of the same sort. If he was insulted, is it a surprise that it should be, or that we his disciples should share his ignominy for believing in his sacraments?

III.—*"The same night in which he was betrayed."*

- (a) We could not conceive the institution at an earlier moment; but it does help us to realize his estimate, that on this extreme occasion he chose this mystery for his last bequest, and said that henceforth he would not drink of the fruit of the vine till he drank it with them in his kingdom.
- (b) Herein, indeed, he unfolds to us deeper elements of his Passion. He has not only died for us, but has died for us that he may consecrate us to this true life into which we only have power to enter through his Passion, this life of consecrated love and suffering for others in fellowship with him, this life which is only possible to us as by his Passion he has made his life available for us and for others.
- (c) Because this Blessed Sacrament is the sustaining food of the Church, his Body, which was formed through his body broken for us. The Church is at once the guardian-home of the Blessed Sacrament, and is itself kept alive by it. And the life of the Church, thus sustained, cannot but reproduce the mystery of his Passion. He loved the Church and gave himself for it, and for the Church he instituted this mystery. Once again, therefore, estimate as he estimates.

The Grace of Sacramental Communion

FIRST TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever."—S. John vi. 51.

Picture: the scene, and the conversation about manna.

Resolve: to give greater heed to my communions.

I.—Communion and life.

- (a) Seeing what it is, it cannot be other than a blessing. The fathers called it the medicine of immortality. It is life; not merely grace, but the giver of grace himself. What S. Paul says is true here, that "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, *hath eternal life*" (S. John vi. 54).
- (b) Life is spiritual: a mechanical interpretation of human life is impossible. And the special purpose of the Holy Communion is the sustenance of life: it is the daily bread of life. Other sacraments are provided for the gift and renewal of life; but if the soul be *unconsciously* in mortal sin, the sacrament of the Body of Christ faithfully received will be for the remission of sins.
- (c) It is unfaithful to doubt the benefit. The food is the Blessed Sacrament. Do not trust your own faith rather than the Blessed Sacrament. Nevertheless, because spiritual, the particular benefit received will be adapted to our capacity to receive it. This is a great consolation: we are not made judges of what is best for ourselves, but he gives just that which is best for us.

II.—Communion and grace.

- (a) Grace is the fruitfulness of the communication of Jesus Christ himself. Hence the Blessed Sacrament is the supreme means of grace for the Christian. All that Jesus Christ is, he is for us, and in this hallowed gift he gives himself.
- (b) The normal grace of a good communion is the strengthening of perseverance. It is this by closer union with himself. Is not this enough to call forth our deepest devotion to this sacrament? Is it not unspeakably faithless when we are moved in our attachment to this great gift by the variable-ness of feeling? We have no more right to demand specially realized experiences than we have to feel better and stronger after each natural meal.
- (c) But particular graces are acquired herein, as he sees our need of them and our capacity to receive them. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's," is true in relation to this sacrament. Bring hither, therefore, your poverty, your sorrow, your weakness, your desire; but not in the spirit of those who sought for a sign from heaven, tempting him.

III.—Grace, and capacity to receive it.

- (a) The degree of benefit is proportioned to one's capacity to receive. This consideration is a great stimulus. A genuine belief in the Blessed Sacrament is a great incentive to progress. Mortification, self-denial, and other virtues, duly exercised, qualify for the reception of greater benefit in communion. They are fruits and preparation alike.
- (b) There is also particular preparation: do not be so proud as to despise this. The whole life may be the ideal preparation; but *your* life cannot afford to neglect the special preparation of examination, contrition, prayer, and devotion. Study therein to desire the Blessed Sacrament more, and especially by meditation.
- (c) And a most valuable preparation for communion is the thanksgiving which follows it. Some, not hindered by time, leave church after communion at the earliest moment, having already made a technical thanksgiving. But stay to realize your gift, renew your resolution, make your colloquies with Jesus in the heart.

Seeking the Heavenly Manna

FIRST WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Our fathers did eat manna in the desert . . . My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven."—S. John vi. 31, 32.

Picture: an Israelite in the wilderness looking upon the manna in the morning.

Resolve: more devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

I.—*Manna.*

- (a) The word *manna* means "What is it?" Many dispute about the Blessed Sacrament, who might profitably learn to value it by grateful reception of the Father's gift. Others despise it just because it is like a common thing (Numb. xi. 6, 7), although it is nourishing their brethren in the wilderness-life. Reflect that the benefit of the gift is not dependent upon understanding what it is.
- (b) It is a new kind of food, sent down from heaven: "He gave them food from heaven" (Ps. lxxviii. 25, P.B.V.); "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven; for the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world." "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"
- (c) The true science for the understanding of the Blessed Sacrament is the science of experience. To the faithful communicant it is found to be like wafers made with flour and honey, and like sweet oil (Ex. xvi. 31; Numb. xi. 8), which expresses to an Eastern mind the perfection of food (see Ezek. xvi. 13). The natural soul "loatheth this light bread" (Numb. xxi. 5); but to the spiritually-minded the promise of God is fulfilled (see Deut. xxxii. 13).

II.—*The principle of supply.*

- (a) "He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack." S. Paul calls it the principle of *equality* (2 Cor. viii. 14, 15). Some do gather much, and yet they have nothing over; not the most advanced Christian can live without his communions.
- (b) But each gets his omer (Ex. xvi. 18). By the generosity of God even he who gets little gets as much as he can use: more would not profit him. Spiritual gifts are not to be measured by a material estimate. Oh, wonderful application of the *equality*! Think more of God's liberality than of your own unworthiness.
- (c) There is no lack in God's storehouse: "He opened the doors of heaven, and rained down manna upon them to eat" (Ps. lxxviii. 23, 24). It is in ourselves that we are straitened; no one has ever failed to find all that he needed, if he sought aright.

III.—*Consider then how to seek aright.*

- (a) The manna was the food for God's own people (Ps. lxxviii. 20); and the heavenly food is for the sons of the kingdom, who have received the Holy Ghost. The manna fell upon the dew (Ex. xvi. 13, 14), and dew is the unction of the Holy Ghost. Let the heart be well nourished with grace, by prompt response to the Holy Spirit, and the manna will be abundantly supplied.
- (b) It is true of the communicant that "the preparation of the heart in man . . . is from the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 1). See that the formal preparation for communion is such, and that it does not sink into the mere recital of an office. God promised, "I will be as the dew unto Israel" (Hos. xiv. 4, 5). Then shall be realized the further blessing that "The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord" (Mic. v. 7); and it is a condition of gathering much that the communicant's life shall not be lived for himself.
- (c) There is no way more after the mind of God than that the communicant shall have kept the dew of his youth (Ps. cx. 3). The early grace of life is easily lost (Hos. vi. 4), but it will be fixed in the gifts of good communions. The manna fell upon the dew and absorbed it (Ex. xvi. 14; Numb. xi. 9).

Showing forth the Lord's Death

FIRST THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Ye do show the Lord's death."—1 Cor. xi. 26.

Picture: the sacred Passion and the altar.

Resolve: to make an act of faith in Christ's death at every participation in eucharistic worship.

I.—*The Lord's death and the sacrifice of the altar.*

- (a) It is one of the mysteries of the Blessed Sacrament which should greatly increase our reverence. Next to martyrdom, one's communion is the closest and fullest connection in this life with his sacred death. It is the meeting of the divine Victim with those whom he has purchased with the price of his death. Let there be acts of faith and thanksgiving.
- (b) This relationship is presented to us not merely by the time of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, and by the evangelical words, but by the Body and Blood in separateness. These outwardly bring before us the deeper relationship, wherein the communication of his Body and Blood is dependent upon the atoning sacrifice, so that we receive all the benefits of his Passion.
- (c) Hence the evangelical character of the sacrament, and of the worship of the Father to whom the faithful draw near in Christ. We are apt to get away from the cross, not seeing that all power springs therefrom. If we bring everything to the altar, remember that the altar is based upon Calvary.

II.—*Showing forth his death.*

- (a) Except for devotional purposes we may put aside an interpretation which connects the showing forth with publicity, for the Blessed Sacrament has always been guarded from public curiosity. As an impressive spectacle to the world the crucifix is of more avail than the mystery of the altar. But devotionally the thought is of value. In these days a known communicant is a marked man; and every such one must show forth the Lord's death in his life, by virtue of the grace received.
- (b) Nor are the words satisfied by an interpretation such as many are content to put upon the words, "Do this in remembrance of me"; for the showing forth is not to ourselves by way of stirring up the mind in devout remembrance. Rather we must bring that with us that our worship may be heart-felt, and that a deep response may be given to him whose desires are toward us in this Blessed Sacrament.
- (c) But with deep faith in the efficacy of his death for us the Church shows forth before the divine Father the one all-availing ground of boldness whereby we draw near. Dwell more upon this way opened to the Father, and upon the power of Christ's meritorious death with him; and let the heart cleansed by the precious Blood be filled with gratitude and the spirit of praise.

III.—*"As oft as ye eat . . . and drink."*

- (a) The only approach to the Father is through the Son, the Redeemer and Mediator. The true commemoration to him is in the gift of the communication of the fruits of the Passion. Any separation between eucharistic worship, assisting at the holy Sacrifice, and communion is due to the limits of human thought. The true memorial before God is the offering of the whole Body of Christ sustained by his Body.
- (b) The position of non-communicating worshippers is that of members of his Body, sustained by his sacramental life, worshipping in virtue of the continuous supplies of sacramental grace. Every such assisting at the altar is both thanksgiving for the last communion and preparation for the next.
- (c) The fullest commemoration of the victory of the Passion is the act of communion. As oft as ye eat and drink ye do show forth the Lord's death. The precious death was for our life, and he that eateth the living Bread hath life. Thus the worship of heaven is presented under the symbol of the Lamb slain surrounded by the redeemed.

Opportunity Sufficient

FIRST FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."—S. Luke xvi. 31.

Picture: the vain regrets of the rich man in hades.

Pray: for grace to make good use of life's opportunity of salvation.

I.—*The result of wasted opportunities.*

- (a) The lost opportunity of love. No hint is given of what we loosely call an evil life: he is declared to be in torments because of what is revealed in the parable through the typical illustration of Lazarus. He shut up his heart in selfishness and did not follow the law of love. Cp. the Epistle.
- (b) The lost opportunity of influence. He had five brethren: not till it was too late did he think of them and see that by his example he was dragging them down with him (ver. 28). We often think that our sins do not influence others, unless we actively lead them into temptation: but it is the example of our lives which influences; selfish and irresponsible lives lead others unconsciously along the same way.
- (c) The uselessness of vain regrets. At length he regretted when he could do nothing. An awful glimpse of hell. But there is a grave corresponding danger lurking beneath our present regrets, in a strong ingredient of self-pity, which mistakes regrets for reform, and is often so swallowed up in them as to make no use of the opportunities that remain, and to incapacitate us for the working out of God's further purposes.

II.—*The opportunities of life are sufficient.*

- (a) There is a temptation to dissatisfaction with one's external surroundings; we blame our circumstances, rather than our failure to make the best of them. Our circumstances are adapted to the purposes of God for us, though not always adapted to *our* desires.
- (b) Learn contentment with one's spiritual lot. We have all that is needful for our salvation. "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." No doubt we have many trials and temptations arising, for example, out of our natural dispositions; or we covet the graces of others, and lament our deficiencies. Such discontent savours of criticizing God.
- (c) Often we are tempted to think that the religion of our age is too common-place. It is difficult to believe when we have not seen: the power of religion seems decayed; there are so many things to be said against Christianity. But the sum of revelation is sufficient if we use it.

III.—*A divine testimony to the worth of the Old Testament.*

- (a) Moses and the prophets would have sufficed to teach them the lesson of life. Their failure lay in not responding to the light and grace which God had given them. Guard against the temptation cheaply to disparage writings to which he has thus testified.
- (b) It transpired as he said. One did rise from the dead, and the Jews believed him not. He has said, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me" (S. John v. 46). If we are not learning the truth of this we are in danger also of closing our eyes to the revelation of Almighty God in history, and we may fail to heed him in the history of our own age also.
- (c) Study to use the Old Testament aright. It is not by shutting our eyes to an intelligent study of it that we shall do so, but yet to study it apart from his testimony to it is to render it profitless to us. Cp. the natural sciences: it is not by ignorance of them that we most appreciate the handiwork of God: but yet a critical investigation of them apart from God has led many to materialism.

The Love of God in us

FIRST SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God,"—1 S. John iv. 16.

Consider: God's revelation of himself under the simile of a stream of light.

Resolve: to dwell more on God's love in devotional fellowship.

I.—*Holiness and love.*

- (a) In this epistle light and love are predicated of Almighty God. "God is light": "God is love." Holiness and love are ultimately one. It is a terrible misconception which can think of holiness as isolated and cold, like a distant snow-capped mountain peak. God's holiness is like the rays of light which stream from the sun with the penetrating glow of warmth.
- (b) When S. John says, "God is light," he embraces the whole substance of the epistle. That God is light is symbol, and is not parallel with "God is love." At first he invites us to consider the symbol of light proceeding forth from God, through the Word, who reveals him in creation, then in the Incarnation, and in the Church of his extended sacramental Body.
- (c) Then he seems to invite us to change the point of view, while retaining the symbol. Consider this light now as the stream of God's love. Love like light must shine forth from itself: it is a going forth. Creation, Incarnation, are goings forth of his love.

II.—*The love of God.*

- (a) In this epistle the writer goes back again and again to the ultimate source, as at the beginning he started from thence with "God is light." To be in the light is to be begotten of God: it is a fact. It is to be therefore in the advocacy with the Father through the propitiation. And the Incarnation is the manifestation of God's love.
- (b) The love of God, which is a going forth from himself, may be regarded in the light of the Incarnation as a self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice is the expression of love. Thus the revelation of the Incarnate life through the self-surrender to death is the revelation of the Fatherhood of God. He spared not his own Son; he spared not himself even from that.
- (c) To be in the light is therefore to be in God's love; to be begotten of him; to be his child. The language, however varied, has an essential unity of fact. To be in the light is through and in the Son: to be in the Son is to share in his sonship: to be son is to be in the full stream of the Father's love, and therefore to be in his holiness, and all through the propitiation.

III.—*The love of God in us.*

- (a) The love of God—God's love—therefore dwelleth in us. Use that. One can see why S. John turns to the exhibition of love to one another as the evidence of God's love in our lives. Let God's love find expression through the development of his love within us.
- (b) S. John dwells pre-eminently upon love within the sphere of fellowship in the Church. It is not a missionary epistle. Love revealed in the fellowship of the light is the divine love: one great cause of failure in Church fellowship is that we too often see one another as individuals in the world rather than as fellow-sharers in God's love. We are not often in the full light in regard to one another.
- (c) S. John dwells frequently on prayer as an exercise of this fellowship in God's love, giving confidence. Intercession is peculiarly an expression of this divine verity; it is the exercise of God's love in us in the spirit of self-sacrifice. The cross is the extremest expression of intercession.

Excuses

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*They all with one consent began to make excuse.*"—S. Luke xiv. 18.

Picture: the host looking at the empty supper-table.

Examine the excuses often made to one's own conscience.

I.—Consider the word "*Excuse.*"

- (a) The reasons alleged seemed good to themselves; they were not deliberately put forward as excuses. The reason for this self-deception was that they thought only of themselves; they had accepted the invitation when it was agreeable to them, and now it was not convenient.
- (b) It is Christ who calls them excuses, who sees through all the plausibility, and knows that the reasons offered for being excused only showed that there was no true appreciation of the invitation, once easily and lightly accepted, but never really valued. This power of Christ to see through to the truth of things is a matter for serious reflection.
- (c) Some day too we shall all see through our conventional salves of conscience. On the last day Christians will be very humble, and the lost will find the aggravation of their disillusionment in the manifestation before their own eyes of their self-deception, and the flimsiness of the reasons which once satisfied them in neglecting the divine invitation.

II.—Consider the excuses.

- (a) Possessions. They are a great distraction, taking the mind off from God and dependence upon him. But the excuse is as poor as is the ignorance of God's greatness which is therein exhibited. Is it not just he who prevents possessions from being corrupted, and makes them a blessing? The possessions may be natural gifts, or pleasure, or independence. But is there one good thing of which he would rob us, and not rather make it more good for us?
- (b) Occupations. They engross us, until there is no mind left with which to regard God. And the more one is occupied in them alone, or as an end, the more is the mind absorbed by them, until one has ceased to ask to what end is this absorption. And yet he invites us to fill such occupations with an eternal purpose, and to find in him rest from their anxiety and wearing burden.
- (c) Home. This satisfies. How sad to think that the life which was intended to draw man to God, should have the power of alienating him from him to the detriment of its happiness! A Christian home is a revelation to the world of the power and joy of our religion.

III.—The true reasons.

- (a) Inappreciation. The host had invited them, and they did not sufficiently appreciate his invitation to postpone other things which would prevent their attendance. It was little to them that they missed his supper; and because they thought too lightly of it, they easily put it off. One has said, "Taste and see that the Lord is gracious." It is the work of Satan to produce spiritual sloth in us.
- (b) Misunderstanding of God. The host invited them that they might be pleased, and that so he too might have pleasure in their company. But we misunderstand our host, and look upon the invitation as the undertaking of a burden. Yet do we truly think that he understands us so little? Or do we suppose that he invites us from selfish motives, so that we put him under an obligation by accepting?
- (c) Disrespect. Such misunderstanding and inappreciation involved them in great disrespect. To accept an invitation and not to keep it is this in any case; but when the host is the almighty Father our disrespect involves the abuse of unequalled generosity, and an insulting disregard of his majesty. May he preserve us from bad excuses for our negligence!

The Sanctification of Love

SECOND MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"We love, because he first loved us."—1 S. John iv. 19 (R.V.).

Picture: love as the true interpreter of character, and the bond of fellowship.

Pray: for the development and sanctification of love.

I.—*Man's relation to love.*

- (a) Here stands one fact: man can love, can will to love; or he can fall short of love through selfishness. And love is an act of the reason; man wills to love, and chooses the objects of his love, and his love is the reflection of his character. He rises to his highest attainment in willing to love God, who is good and the goal of his being.
- (b) Here stands the other fact: all love is of God. The love which a cat has for its kittens is of God, although irrational. Human love is of God in a higher order. We appreciate that in reverencing maternity. And it is none the less his gift because men exercise it without willing to love him, or because they abuse love. The Christian not only loves, but he also knows that his love is of God; he seeks it from him, and praises him for it: he prays that he may not misuse so great a gift.
- (c) The love of God is consummated in the gift of his Son. There it is incarnated. There is revealed the full manifestation of God's love in the nature of the Godhead: "God so loved the world, that he gave." Thus the revelation of Jesus Christ is the measure of God's love. He died for his enemies: the effect of his death is due to the love which he gave.

II.—*Use and abuse of love.*

- (a) Man's duty is to love God in all, and all in God, because for this he was created. His power is that he can will to do that for which he was born. Man's accomplishment depends on his recognition and use of the fact that love is of God, that he can communicate with God through love, and that God wills to bestow upon him the gift of love.
- (b) Man's abuse is to remove his love from God and to place it elsewhere, on himself, or on another apart from God, or on some transitory object, by a misapplication of his rational powers. (Lust is not love at all, but selfishness.)
- (c) Man's difficulty in exercising love aright lies in the perversion of his will: his life is out of gear. God in his mercy has not withdrawn love from us: so great is his love that he tolerates the abuse of his gifts rather than that we should be deprived of them. The temptation to misdirect love should be a motive for dependence upon God that he may direct our hearts into the love of God.

III.—*Spheres of love.*

- (a) We shall learn to love God by learning to love him in those who bring realization to us of his love. Above all, study Christ; try to imitate him, consider his love, and then himself as the true revelation of God. In particular consider his Passion, and will to love him in it.
- (b) The Church is especially the sphere of Christian love. It consists of those who love God, and in a particular degree are the recipients of his love. We should look at our companions in this way, and love them in God. Do not look at them in this way, but love those of them who please you, and you are transferring your love from God to them.
- (c) Natural attachment is another sphere of love: e.g. love of family, friends, music, athletics, etc. All these degrees of love are of God, and are therefore good, so as they are used to draw our hearts to God: each has its interpretation of God to give us. Our humanity ranges from the dust up to God; throughout this range flows the stream of God's love in our life, drawing us Godwards. And the one impediment is selfishness, love stopping short at self; and selfishness is sin, doing what I want to do, instead of bathing in the light of God's love.

All Things now Ready

SECOND TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Come, for all things are now ready."—S. Luke xiv. 17.

Picture: the host, filled with joy at the prospect of entertaining his guests.

Resolve: an act of thanksgiving, and an act of reparation.

I.—*The greatness of our present privileges.*

- (a) It was not always so. Before the Incarnation the invitation was not announced. The Jews had received the call, and it is they who made the excuses; but the great Gentile world was still in the streets and lanes. While as yet the great supper was only in preparation, he was preparing man to receive the invitation.
- (b) But in his mind all things were ready from the first. This helps us to understand his government of the world. A purpose runs through history, and this purpose is not to be disappointed. His house must be filled. Our blessed Lord in these parables addresses himself to the Jewish failure as preparatory to the Gentile invitation. Very rarely does he hint at a later return of the Jews (S. Matt. xxiii. 39).
- (c) And thus we are strengthened to trust him with regard to those who have not heard the invitation. There is purpose in history, and the Almighty does not hasten. It is we who cry out impatiently that this must cease at once, that the world must be converted to-day. But he waits.

II.—*Consider the bounty of God.*

- (a) The words express the mind of God to us in the Christian dispensation. We may trace the divine preparation from the Incarnation until Pentecost. For thirty years the preparation is unseen by man; then he prepares his own people as a nucleus for the wider invitation, which still waits. He prepares his bounty by the mystery of his own Passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. At length he issues his world-wide invitation, for all is now ready.
- (b) And the Father's heart is ready. He is waiting in eager expectation for the company of those who have accepted the invitation, for the return of the indifferent, the confidence of the perplexed, the fellowship of the happy. The Gentile world has repeated the history of Judaism.
- (c) The words remind us of the invitation to the supper of the great God (Apoc. xix. 17). "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (ver. 9). The invitation now is to prepare ourselves for that final summons; life here and hereafter is one, even as the fellowship is one.

III.—*The Church speaks in the name of her Master.*

- (a) In the accessibility of the sacraments. Baptism is always ready for the infant: water, the most universal material; by an extension of liberality this one sacrament may be administered on necessity by any Christian. The Holy Communion is daily offered to us, and can be reserved for the sick, so that at any moment of the day or night it shall be ready. Penance, whenever desired, and the sacrament never refused by reason of the gravity of the sins.
- (b) In the zeal of her priests inspired by the grace of Holy Orders. "Your servants, for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. iv. 5). Pray for them, that they may make manifest God's bounty in their lives. A careless priesthood, which has no love of souls, nor zeal for the glory of God, is a terrible impediment to the interpretation of God's bounty to the world.
- (c) In the love of the brethren to one another. We have the mind of Christ. Readiness to forgive, yearning over the indifferent, sympathy with the isolation of a heart shut up within itself; these and like affections ought to be found in those who are enjoying the divine bounty. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

At Liberty to bear Others' Burdens

SECOND WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Bear ye one another's burdens."—Gal. vi. 2,

Picture: a procession of slaves, falling under their loads.

Pray: for the grace of a heart free from anxiety.

I.—*"And so fulfil the law of Christ."*

- (a) Christ's law, not the Jewish. The pharisaic Christians were not keeping the law (Gal. vi. 13), but only such parts of it as seemed good to them; and they desired that the Galatians should do the same for the perfecting of their Christianity (Gal. iii. 3). Now with such a burden (S. Matt. xxiii. 4; Acts xv. 10) S. Paul would have nothing to do; but there is a law of Christ, and in it Christians will find burdens to bear.
- (b) One fundamental truth of the law of Christ is that he has borne and bears our burdens (S. Matt. viii. 17; 1 S. Pet. ii. 24), thereby enabling us to bear them (Gal. vi. 5). The Jewish covenant laid upon men the intolerable law, and had no power to move with one finger even the burden of daily obligation and duty; but in Jesus Christ is both remission of sins and grace to help our infirmities (Rom. v. 10; viii. 3).
- (c) There is another aspect of the Christian law no less fundamental. Christian fellowship is not only a dogmatic fact, but because of that it is also an experience and a duty. The law of brotherhood is an essential element of the Law of Christ, and bearing one another's burdens is a manifestation of this unity.

II.—*"Bear ye one another's burdens."*

- (a) A wise provision has appointed this verse as the chapter of None. The afternoon is the least spiritual part of the day; one is almost unconsciously slackening in anticipation of the day's end, and the vigour of the morning is gone. Now, when one is least fitted to bear another's burden, the recitation of the chapter is a good stimulus. What better preparation, for example, for the parochial visiting, together with the antiphon, "Give me understanding"?
- (b) Burdens are of many sorts, but they are to be distinguished from the legitimate responsibility of a man's life. In ver. 2 the burden is more than a man's daily load; it implies the heaviness of the load. In ver. 5 it is another word, and expresses the idea of a "pack." It is the difference between the picture of the meditation and the soldier's kit or the packman's load.
- (c) According to the different kinds of burden is the varied manner of helping it to be borne. Sin, scruple, anxiety, sickness, ill-treatment, neglect, poverty, the burden of one's self, and so on. Only in the fellowship of the Body, sustained by the grace of Christ, can one exercise rightly the gift of bearing in prayer, sympathy, and help, by example and stimulus.

III.—*How to bear.*

- (a) Only the heart at liberty from itself is free to bear the weights of others. Self-centred religion can do nothing but be a burden to self and to others alike. The patronizing and ostentatious fussiness, which often passes muster as "Church work," is removed by a whole universe from this ease of a heart accessible to and in sympathy with others by reason of its own peace with God.
- (b) Many burdens are lightened without one's knowledge, and even while the other knows not whence comes his relief. A cheerful heart is always doing this; as also the heart which is set upon pleasing God. It is wonderful, too, how the refusal to recognize that one's own pack is heavy in the readiness of brotherly love makes one's load lighter.
- (c) One must be accessible to others in order that they may be willing to share their burdens with us. The pride which refuses to let another share our burden is a fatal impediment to the bearing of others' burdens. This is a law of fellowship in the equality of brotherhood; it is not the law of patronage.

Influence

SECOND THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee."—Numb. x. 32.

Picture: the interview between Moses and Hobab.

Pray: for a deeper understanding of the character of influence.

I.—*The secret of influence.*

- (a) No one can influence another to his highest good without the grace of God. Influence is not personal attraction, or the becoming a hero to another; but it is just doing what God is doing to me; the reproducing of the life of Christ within. It is a mistake to lay one's self out to influence: rather one should lay one's self out to be influenced—by God. It is easy to attract others to one's self; what is of value is that they be attracted to God.
- (b) This highest influence can only be exercised because he is doing the same in me. It is one of the considerations conducive to the pursuit of sanctity. We too are to say, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." And consider what is here involved: I can influence, because he is doing goodness unto me. Do not deny the Christian power and so underrate what God is doing within you.
- (c) Such influence is in the main unconscious, and is in any case rather a matter of reverent wonder than of self-congratulation. Influence is only showing forth what we have received of him. Self-centredness is the great ruin of influence; there is no desire there to do unto others what the Lord does to us. And so self-centredness is an ingratitude.

II.—*Influence and humility.*

- (a) Moses felt the need of Hobab (see ver. 31). Always look for what is worthy of respect in others; true influence is not patronage but appreciation of merit and possibility. It is to bring the good to the surface, not to make a following for one's self.
- (b) Moses felt the superiority of Hobab. On the journey which they were undertaking he appreciated all that Hobab could contribute and of which himself stood in need. There is the true humility of influence, it estimates others more highly than one's self. And as to himself, Moses had nothing to offer; he could only invite Hobab to share in what the Lord would do.
- (c) There is no greater source of humility than the conviction of God's goodness to one's self, and no stronger element in influence than this same. "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." And "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you."

III.—*The law of influence.*

- (a) The Christian religion, when truly received, is always a power. It is not meant for one's self alone, and if so used it dies away. The power which works within is one which kindles power. Appreciate the promises of God to the degree of enthusiasm: they are not such trifles that they can at all be appreciated without enthusiasm. See the language of Moses. And enthusiasm kindles enthusiasm.
- (b) The Christian religion is a purpose, it is a future which is already begun. "We are journeying," and on the journey we receive "what goodness the Lord shall do unto us." And further there is always the expectation of goodness, for "the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."
- (c) To appreciate the power of enthusiasm and expectant purpose upon influence, contrast the ineffectiveness of a depressing religion, which sees only penalties, and obligations, and which looks not to the goodness of the Lord: which has only a wilderness in the present, and a very uncertain goal at the end.

The Divine Thirst

SECOND FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*I thirst.*"—S. John xix. 28.

"*Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.*"—S. John iv. 7.

Picture: the six hours on the cross.

Resolve: to seek to share in the divine thirst.

I.—*The word on the cross.*

- (a) He had been hanging now for about six hours. Earlier he had refused the drugged wine (S. Matt. xxvii. 34): now after the three hours of darkness exhausted human nature requires revival, that he may in the full consciousness of human powers resign his soul.
- (b) And his tired body thirsted for rest, and there was no rest for it but in the tomb. He had used his body of flesh as his servant, neither sparing it nor exalting it beyond its natural sphere; he had been weary and hungry and thirsty. He had not always known where to lay his head. And in these last hours he had endured both the insults of exposure and the agony of scourging, knowing that by his stripes we are healed.

II.—*He thirsted for God.*

- (a) He thirsted for the rest of God from the turmoil of life and the contradiction of sinners. He had indeed been despised and rejected of men during these years that he had suffered their manners in the wilderness. And now he thirsted, as one who has striven and been victorious. His next word is: "It is finished."
- (b) And he had been the experience, which passes our limited understandings, of being made sin for man (Gal. iii. 13; 2 Cor. v. 21). He had cried upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and passing from the hours of darkness into the full light of conscious resignation of life, he thirsts for God.

III.—*He thirsted for the souls of men.*

- (a) He thirsted to see of the travail of his soul. This thirst was now the more intense because of the mystery of the Passion, with its experience of sin, and its realization of victory into which he enters that he may bring his own with him.
- (b) And he thirsted for that fuller experience of fellowship with human nature, which was to be realized in the life of his mystical Body through the incorporation of redeemed mankind into union with himself: "I in them, and they in me." His human heart in union with his divine person sought for deeper fellowship with man than had been realized even by the closeness of his disciples to him.

IV.—*Our thirst.*

- (a) It must begin with us with the thirst for the water of life which he freely gives (S. John iv. 10 ff.). "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." This thirst, which he only can satisfy, is to supply us with that further thirst which he is waiting also to relieve: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Consider that hunger and thirst are real and severe experiences.
- (b) And as he satisfies this thirst, he gives us to share in his own thirst for others, and his desire to satisfy their thirst. To each of his faithful disciples he says, "Give me to drink," though it be only in the form of a cup of cold water or the drink to the thirsty (S. Matt. x. 42; xxv. 35, 40). And he bids us, through the water of life which he supplies, become a source of living water to the thirsty souls of men (S. John vii. 37-39).
- (c) And so, as we enter into fuller fellowship with him in his Passion, he gives us to share also in his thirst for God. "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God; when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?" "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth after thee in a barren and dry land where no water is."

The Use of the Tongue

SECOND SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*Yea, yea; Nay, nay.*"—S. Matt. v. 37; S. Jas. v. 12 (R.V. marg.); 2 Cor. i. 17.

Picture: S. James' illustration of the tongue.

Resolve: to watch the use of the tongue.

I.—Consider the words in S. Matthew.

- (a) While the world is such as it is we cannot demand to be believed just because we are Christians. The world is not capable of understanding such a thing, and those who name the Name of Christ have too often abused their responsibility.
- (b) But the individual Christian should so impress his character upon others, as not to have more than assertion required of him by those who know him: otherwise his reputation is not what it should be. There is responsibility in speech, that it be reliable; grave while not heavy, because his heart is happy; yet he is not carried away into levity, because his heart is balanced by a sense of the judgment of God.
- (c) Above all things his speech is transparently true; he relies on courtesy to save him from bluntness; and this is not venge, but the gentle influence of the Holy Spirit. In silent speech with God he has formed the habit of Christian speech. He who talks much with God does not dare to make his speech common or unclean, cheap or despised.

II.—Consider the words in S. James.

- (a) Possibly a reference to the sermon on the Mount, because such references are frequent in this epistle. A reminder to follow the teaching of Jesus Christ in applied detail: ponder over it to see the applications to daily life.
- (b) An application of point I. to the special temptation to impatience and exaggeration under untoward circumstances: the curb of self-discipline is required on the tongue. There is great value in silence: S. James' language suggests that he preferred it to loquacity.
- (c) The school of discipline for the tongue is prayer: let the freest speech be there, and it will hallow the tongue. Being sick (let us add spiritually), instead of talking let him pray. Is any elated? Let him fear the emptiness of froth and rather praise God.

III.—Consider the words in S. Paul.

- (a) He says that his language does not manifest the lightness of inconsistency; *yea* one time, and *nay* another. There is a danger in light promises: promises are pledges. There is the flippant speaker of whom it must be said that "You never know whether he means what he says." What a miserable thing for a man's logos! There is too much speech which has no connection with the mind: the mind has not been formed in the school of Christ.
- (b) Nor is his language that of over-confidence and obstinacy: the *Yea, yea*—and the *Nay, nay*, repeated with emphasis. Some speech takes too much to itself, and leaves out of reckoning the divine element which should modify all our calculations. Let there be an undercurrent of "If God will." The examination of conscience must have taught us how often, when confident, we have found ourselves to be wrong.
- (c) S. Paul has a mind, and his mind is in obedience to God. Speech is the reflection of character: it does not strain itself for the sake of edification: it is too honest for that. It is in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but with the grace of God (2 Cor. i. 12). For right speech we must be true, and disciplined, and men of prayer.

Humility

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Humble yourselves."—1 S. Pet. v. 6.

Consider: S. Peter's denial and restoration.

Resolve: to learn humility by leaning upon the grace of God, especially in forgiveness.

I.—*Humility towards one another.*

- (a) Even this is rare, though our neighbours cannot be blind to our faults, and can quickly see through the self-defence of pride. Below the lack of humble bearing lies the ignorance of self, making genuine humility impossible. Thus S. Peter's ready assertion that he would not deny was not an empty boast, but expressed his ignorance of his weakness.
- (b) Rare, too, because we have made so little progress in brotherly love, whereby we should learn to forget self, and what our pride demands, by being drawn out of ourselves. By love, also, one would learn to see his brother in the true light, and draw out what is best in him, and so become more conscious of one's shortcomings towards him.
- (c) Both these deficiencies are due to lack of humility towards Almighty God, from which comes the essential character of humility in all its forms. This fundamental humility is the issue of long spiritual training, overcoming the natural assertion of independence, self-justification, and confidence in one's own strength.

II.—*Humility towards God.*

- (a) The great battle between self and God turns on this radical defect. It has been expressed for all time in the arguments of S. Paul between faith and works. "Works" means independence, self-respect. "Faith" is the entire abandonment of self-satisfaction, and the great venture of throwing one's self entirely upon God and his mercy.
- (b) The history of the battle is more or less life-long. In some it seems to be fought out on one field of crisis in which the soul sees its barrenness, and surrenders. A great consciousness of forgiveness is very humbling, as is seen in the restoration of S. Peter. Not that even so, self does not assert itself again and again, forcing one to cry out that self may be crushed, and that one may realize more fully that one lives by grace alone.
- (c) This conflict is the learning of the truth of grace, until one knows that the very humility which makes one able to receive grace profitably is itself a grace. And there is no better way in which to learn humility than by magnifying the grace of God in one's life; but to seek to acquire humility by the practice of humble acts very often feeds self-satisfaction and encourages spiritual pride.

III.—*A condition of spiritual rest.*

- (a) There is a close connection between the verses of this epistle (cp. v. 5-7). It is our pride which prevents us from casting our anxieties upon him who taketh watchful care of us. The truly humble will always be a child with God, unreserved, simple, ready to be helped and relieved.
- (b) And pride is inherently restless, and has to bear its own burdens. It is always ready to be hurt and to assert its self-sufficiency. The soul was made for God, and pride keeps it from him; hence the restlessness of pride which is in continual rebellion against the life for which man was made.
- (c) Consider the great example and invitation of Jesus Christ. The example manifested in his life of entire trust in his Father, issuing in its restfulness amid trials. His invitation to come unto him, that one may find rest unto one's soul, seeing that he is meek and lowly of heart. There is no one who labours and is heavy-laden like the man who stands by himself, supported by pride.

Seeking the Lost

THIRD MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—S. Luke xix. 10.

Picture: the parable of the lost sheep.

Pray: for sympathy with the heart of Jesus.

I.—*The work of the Saviour.*

- (a) The Incarnation is the seeking of us men and our salvation. He yearned for the Incarnation as a going out to his own, the Good Shepherd seeking *my* sheep which was *lost*. In taking humanity to himself he realized its oneness with himself. Hence while Pharisees and scribes murmured, publicans and sinners were drawn to him.
- (b) This attraction still exists towards the ascended Son of Man: every conversion is a manifestation of it. No man can make two other men understand each other; he can only bring them together and leave them to find each other out. An evangelist may thus help in the work of conversion, but the conversion itself is the individual response to the going out of the heart of the divine Saviour towards his own.
- (c) And this work is continued after the initial conversion, which may indeed need to be followed up by other conversions, for no one can be secure of salvation until his death. But further, it is his office not only to seek but to save, and salvation involves the whole work of grace: it is life in its widest interpretation.

II.—*A peculiar union established between the Saviour and his people in this work.*

- (a) It opens the disciple's heart to realize more deeply the relation of the Saviour to himself: as he realizes himself in others, the Master becomes more dear to him as Saviour. This openness of heart enables him to penetrate further into the inexhaustibleness of the heart of God as revealed in the Son of Man.
- (b) A special sympathy is evoked. The disciple becomes like one of the neighbours and friends who rejoice with the shepherd in his recovered sheep. There is the sympathy of joy, and behind it the sympathy of loss, anxiety, search. The great Founder of the Church stamped himself upon his Society when he gave it the commission of evangelization.
- (c) In both these experiences the disciple realizes with increasing intimacy the fellowship of prayer. For his own needs and in his personal dealings with his Lord his fuller understanding of the Saviour gives reality and warmth to his prayers. His own experiences in the work of evangelization, and his consciousness, growing daily in strength, that there is but one Saviour, and that he alone can rescue and save, send him continually to the work of prayer for encouragement, renewal of fervour, until he learns to be importunate with a daring which the gospel has invited.

III.—*This is the work of all Christians.*

- (a) The work of saving is manifold, and it is given to one in one way and to another in another. Be not jealous that another's way is not yours. Seek to enter into the mind of Christ, and you will find that your life also has its element of fellowship with the Saviour. Direct evangelization is only one portion of it; but many lives fail to realize their true power because they do not realize their own salvation.
- (b) Prayer is the first as it is the greatest sphere of fellowship in the work of the Saviour. Pray daily for the conversion of sinners and of the heathen, for the steadfastness of the newly converted, for those who are called to evangelistic work, for the spirit of the Saviour to be poured upon all priests.
- (c) To have the desire to share in this work is a proper object of prayer: he alone can warm the heart into union with his own. Then indeed the *duty* of intercession will pass into a realized fellowship, and the vocation of life will be found to be one's appointed sphere of work, and the Saviour will open the way for his disciple.

The Activity of the Devil

THIRD TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, steadfast in the faith."—1 S. Pet. v. 8, 9.

Picture: the illustration here used.

Pray: for strength of character.

I.—*The adversary, the devil.*

- (a) Not all temptation is from the devil; he can often afford to leave us alone. But it is very popular now to deny his existence, and to substitute "tendencies," "influences," "environment," "inheritance," and the like, all very useful words for tracing the wide-reaching malice of evil. A deep knowledge of self, an acquaintance with the history of human lives, and experience of the conversion of the heathen, carry us behind machinations to the personal malice.
- (b) The division of temptations into their proper classes is not so important as a deep consciousness of danger within and without, of human weakness and divine strength, and the need of grace to make one strenuous to resist. Belief in the devil involves the realization that Christians in their new kingdom are in the sphere of non-material strife (Eph. vi. 10-12). That there is war in heaven is the experience of every strenuous Christian.
- (c) As "adversary" he is presented to us as the antithesis of the Paraclete; he accuses as the other defends (Apoc. xii. 10). As "devil" he is seen to be the perverter of good. In the heaven within us we are acquainted with him in both aspects; he causes us to lose heart, to despair of ourselves; and he perverts watchfulness into introspection, a knowledge of our own hearts into morbid self-consciousness, and God's disciplinary dealings with us into his neglect or our loss of his grace. Good it is to be not ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. ii. 11).

II.—*His activity—our unpreparedness.*

- (a) He is pictured here as a roaring lion, elsewhere as dragon or serpent. The language is based on O.T. (Ps. xxii. 13), but the simile is drawn from general experience, and includes the suggestion of his secret lying in wait, his intimidating roar, and his sudden attack with dreadful violence.
- (b) His walking about may be based on the drama of Job. It reminds us of his ceaseless activity; no wonder that S. Peter says "Be sober, be vigilant." Against his activity contrast your supineness, against his wiliness your unpreparedness through fear, and your shaking at his roar.
- (c) His aim is destruction; to swallow up. In this there is unceasing purpose. Give him his due; impelled by a strong passion of malice, revenge, and despair, there is no limit to his energy, no faint-heartedness. He has known the joys of heaven; measure by that his undying energy of hate, and do not allow sloth to dull the will or blur the vision.

III.—*"Whom resist, steadfast in the faith."*

- (a) Resistance is not the necessary evil, a defect in the heavenly life; it is the training-ground of character, which is to be stark, firm, and bold; as also the resistance is the way of security (S. Jas. iv. 7). It is said of the lion that if his prey boldly outstares him he will turn tail; it is he, who, alarmed by his roar, seeks to escape or stands helpless, that the lion springs upon.
- (b) The sphere of the resistance is our faith. The words are capable of more than one interpretation; our faith may remind us to strengthen our reliance upon God (Ps. xci. 13). By trust in him weak women have faced lions, and we too have our arena of struggle. Or the words may be interpreted by 1 S. John v. 4; our faith is summed up in the confession of the victory of Jesus Christ through apparent weakness and defeat (cf. S. John xvi. 33).
- (c) Or we may translate more literally, "Steadfast by the faith." We lose heart when, after much high-sounding language of encouragement, we are thrown back upon perseverance and steadfastness. S. Peter reminds us of their source; there is a grace acquired by the instrumentality of the faith. One there is who by resistance overcame: his steadfastness is at our disposal.

Staleness

THIRD WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?"—Deut. xxxi, 17.

Consider: the truth and perversion of these words: read vers. 16-18.

Resolve: some practical application suggested by these thoughts.

I.—*The temptation to staleness.*

- (a) After a time, when freshness has given place to a habit of ease, correspondence with one's environment engenders spiritual sloth. Most people can do better—at first, under a change of circumstances, which stimulates freshness. Israel had such an impetus in the days of Joshua. If freshness is not to wear off there must be interior correspondence of purpose; and purpose also will get stale if not continually refreshed.
- (b) The human mind requires stimulus. If it do not find it in the increased sense of purpose, it seeks after novelty. Thus, if one do not find freshness in God and in the satisfaction of his purposes, and the enjoyment of his society, he looks around him for a new experience, and finds in his environment, but without a purpose in it, what he seems to want; he goes a-whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land.
- (c) To be spiritually stale is a most dangerous state: it is the symptom of lost fellowship with God. Without him the restless heart wanders about seeking satisfaction anywhere. And restlessness produces dissatisfaction and discontent: and these are the rebellion of the heart against a false stimulus, which does not satisfy.

II.—*The history of staleness.*

- (a) The other side to the loss of freshness is the gradual withdrawal of God, who is not to be lightly despised or forsaken. He will leave the soul which does not continue to feed upon him. The withdrawal of God is not cruel: it is necessary. He cannot remain in the heart except by response to him. What the writer has expressed (vers. 16, 17) as the divine indignation is an essential law of the spiritual.
- (b) Many evils follow from this loss of unused grace (see ver. 17). In the discontent of staleness, which thinks only of its own satisfaction, the loss of grace is often unrealized, because the grace has not been appreciated. The most serious evils are to make one's self content with one's surroundings in a purposeless manner, which is worldliness; or in reckless search after novelty, which is the despair of dissatisfaction.
- (c) Another common evil is to seek after duties which are not to hand, instead of doing those which lie before one. As the former evils were a false satisfaction with one's surroundings, so this is the failure to find true satisfaction in them, from the joy of fulfilling God's purposes. Either evil may manifest itself in frivolity, but in this latter case it is a poor attempt at self-deception.

III.—*The perversions of staleness.*

- (a) If the soul which is stale blames itself, it does not do so rightly. It blames its incapacity, weakness of will, lack of fixed purpose, or any but the right thing; and it discontentedly acquiesces in its failure. But it does not blame itself that it has had acquaintance with God, and yet has not come to know him, so as to find satisfaction in him, and to perceive the loss of friendship which is leaving the heart empty.
- (b) Such a one more probably blames his companions: he is driven to frivolity from lack of anything sensible, his condition of life is not fair, and gives him no opportunity to do better. He does not see that the accepted will of God, as the purpose of life, would have changed all this, and have made his surroundings full of life at its best and brimming over with engrossing interest.
- (c) He often blames God indirectly by blaming his lot; he rarely blames him directly. But beneath all his sophistries lies the perversion of the words of the meditation. He does not admit to himself that his state of mind is due to loose walking with God, which can be corrected; he thinks only of "sins," and not of the fulfilment here and to-day of that divine purpose in life in which he is to realize fellowship with him.

The Life without Anxiety

THIRD THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you."—1 S. Pet. v. 7.

Picture: the lost sheep restored to the Good Shepherd's care.

Resolve: to cast anxiety upon him.

I.—*The world's misunderstanding of our religion.*

- (a) It regards it as a burden, a restraint upon the full exercise of life, and the imposition of an external rule. It seems to infringe liberty and to rob life of its joy. The world has no idea that the will of God taken to ourselves is the expansion of life, the entrance into freedom, and the increase of joy and light-heartedness.
- (b) Or as a drug, a comfort to the dying lest they should be fearful. The consolations of religion are offered on death-beds, where the medicine of religion has not been administered. There is a heavy responsibility on God's priests to resist this false impression. The Good Shepherd will never cease his search for the sheep; but it is useless to say that the sheep has been found when it is still wandering or is perishing in the wilderness.
- (c) Or as irrational. It sees no philosophy in our religion; at the most it sees in the Christian a man of high principles. The world never understands grace, and therefore it hates the sacraments. It supposes that Christians are what they are because of their natural dispositions, and that what they believe is superstition.

II.—*Some elements of the spiritual life.*

- (a) Peace. That is the foundation: a state of harmony between God and his child. It is not based on the child's attainments, but on the Father's acceptance of him just because he is his. "Rejoice with me, for I have found *my* sheep." And the sheep is none the less his sheep, although it may not yet have learned not to wander again from the place of safety.
- (b) Grace. This finding was of grace. "I have found." The sheep has not discovered its own safety. And the life thus begun is maintained by grace. All is grace: there is God's good will behind all, then the energies of that good will in finding, keeping, nourishing, and strengthening.
- (c) Rest. The true relation is not appreciated until the Christian is learning the truth of S. Peter's words by getting away from himself into God's protective care of him in all the anxieties of his life. He applies himself to this basal fact of God's character whenever he is in trouble with himself or about others. God is not to be solely the one to whom we turn in sin, but also he to whom we turn in every difficulty and perplexity, just because we are his.

III.—*Three stages of life.*

- (a) Trust in self. This is the lack of religion. The sheep enjoys being lost. The fold would be a burden to him. It is the state of a man who enjoys sin; or whose end is in himself, as, for example, the moral man, who finds his strength of will a sufficient guide.
- (b) Distrust of self without trust in God. This is seeking after religion; the sheep is lost and knows it. It desires the fold, but cannot find its way in. It is the state of anxiety of the man who is concerned about himself, but has not learnt to cast this anxiety upon God, for he has not grasped that God taketh responsible and protective care of him.
- (c) Trust in God. He now understands God, and that just to be his is sufficient for all things. He trusts God with his life, because it is God's. He does not trouble about his unworthiness—even that is no anxiety to him—because God knows all about it. He does the will of God, in the grace which God gives him, because he has confidence in God's will.

The Good Shepherd rejoicing

THIRD FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost."—S. Luke xv. 6.

Picture: the Good Shepherd, footsore and weary, yet rejoicing, because the wandering sheep is folded round his neck.

Make ardent acts of thanksgiving to the Good Shepherd.

I.—*Consider the search of the Good Shepherd as concentrated on yourself.*

- (a) Begun far back in the eternity of the divine counsels: continued in the long training of mankind preparatory to the Incarnation: most strikingly manifested in the search revealed in the four Gospels—in teaching, in conflict, in miracle and parable, with women, children, enquirers, etc. Always searching to reach the heart of man.
- (b) In our own few years what a searching after us to fix wandering resolutions, to curb growing tendencies to mischief, to plant principles where there were only fancies and vague wishes! Study it in the details of your own life.
- (c) A remarkable proof of the Shepherd's true devotion to us individually, that to-day we ourselves are not among the indifferent. Dare we attribute it to anything else than the unremitting care of the Good Shepherd? How this thought should move us to loving confidence, and curb our self-will and independence of spirit!

II.—*Consider the mind of the Shepherd towards the sheep which was found—rejoicing.*

- (a) There is still much to concern him over us: the Shepherd's work is not without trouble inside the fold. The sheep often do not know what is good for them, and they seem to have an almost inveterate tendency to wander, and a strong habit of following one another. Yet he rejoices over them.
- (b) Humbly, thankfully, we take that as his permanent attitude in spite of our failings. We are his, and he is ours, and therein he rejoices. Trouble? What is that to him, if only he has and can keep his sheep! To be his is in his sight a greater matter than any trouble we can now give him. And if we wander he will go out in search again.
- (c) It is no presumption to worry him with our concerns. His attitude towards us gives us the key to what should be ours towards him. It is no unwarrantable liberty to assume that he knows and makes allowances. Nothing which concerns *us* is indifferent to *him*. Oh that what concerns *him* might not be indifferent to *us*!

III.—*Consider the sheep in the fold.*

- (a) In its proper home, where it can lie down in rest and safety. The wild moor-land may be pleasant, but it is not safe; self-sought pastures may be attractive, but they are not always to be found, and the food may be less nourishing than we think. But here are safety and nourishment.
- (b) It only requires, so says S. Peter, the humility which will adopt this position. "Casting all your anxiety upon him, for he careth for you" (Ep.). There is a divine carelessness, which is the result of confidence. Psalm xxiii. gives expression to it. Let the consideration of I. (b) help to teach us this humility of spirit.
- (c) And this fold is no prison-house: it is the going in and out through the door, which is Christ, and finding safety, liberty, and support (S. John x. 9). Not a restraint upon liberty, but the finding of unimpeded liberty, instead of its destruction.

The God of All Grace

THIRD SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"The God of all grace."—1 S. Pet. v. 10.

Picture: S. Peter with S. John Baptist.

Appreciate grace, and thank God wherever its work is found.

I.—*John Baptist and Peter.*

- (a) Presumably S. Peter began as the disciple of John. For it was the Baptist who drew S. Andrew to the Lamb of God, and Andrew brought Peter with a message which exhibits him as belonging to the same circle. John Baptist and S. Peter, both rugged honest men of single purpose; both led by grace, but how differently!
- (b) John, the greatest of the old; vouchsafed a great human intimacy with the Messiah through his mother. Peter to be the chief of the new, the rock, always named first, and on and after Pentecost to be regarded as the great pillar; the one whom the neophyte Saul went up to visit (Gal. i. 18), known through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia (1 S. Pet. i. 1).
- (c) At one later stage the two meet in a spiritual experience, John, disheartened by the enforced inactivity of prison, lost heart. "Art thou he that should come?" Peter, in face of imminent risk in Rome, was retreating. John sent to Jesus to enquire, and was encouraged to die: Peter met the ascended Lord, on the road, going to be crucified again for him, and turned back to Rome to be put to death.

II.—*Illustrations of grace.*

- (a) Common to contrast the two. One sees virtues in John Baptist which are appreciated by the natural man; and it is easy to regard him as the highest attainment of non-Christian life. But his very name reminds us that grace was not first given in Christianity. He is as much the product of grace as is Peter. Admire the variety of grace.
- (b) Peter was called to be an apostle; John was not. But who would have doubted at the time that John would have been the most natural one to be called? We should, perhaps, have reckoned that John held back from his call, for we are always inclined to suppose that there must be a call of God wherever man sees an obvious suitability. But reverence the freedom of grace.
- (c) Grace is given for that which God wills of us, not for that which we should like to do. There were other purposes for John than to become an apostle, and grace was given him to fulfil them. God willed that Peter should become the chief apostle, and grace was given him to respond. Shall we say that the God of all grace erred in either case? Learn the wisdom of grace.

III.—"*The God of all grace.*"

- (a) God works in many ways to perfect many characters. He proved to be the God of all grace to John Baptist, not less when the Baptist's faith was weak than when he faced Herod or went to his death. And likewise to Peter, the typical Christian, made strong out of weakness, fallen, repentant, and risen again.
- (b) The rock has not one but two lessons to reveal. He has his primacy not only because he first expressed the stability of faith in the person of Christ, but because he was to manifest as apostle the inexhaustibility of grace. And it is by maintaining the faith of Christ that the Church holds firmly to the gospel of grace.
- (c) The experience of personal history (1 S. Pet. v. 10, R.V., and S. Luke xxii. 32, R.V.) is revealed in opening the kingdom of grace to those who receive the faith of Christ (Acts ii. 36 ff.), in offering the hope of grace to the blinded conscience (viii. 22, 23), in manifesting the power of grace to cleanse life (x. 28) and to embrace the heathen world (x. 45). A good steward of the manifold grace of God (1 S. Pet. iv. 10).

The One Judge

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged."—S. Luke vi. 37.

Consider: the reversal of human judgments at the last day, and especially Christ the Judge who was judged by us in the person of Pilate.

Pray God to restrain your tendency to judge and criticize.

I.—*Judgment is a divine prerogative.*

- (a) God alone has authority to judge. He is the Master: to him all belong, to him each stands or falls. He made all, and for his purposes; he provided the initial conditions under which each one of us has to form his character; it is for him to apportion blame.
- (b) He alone is qualified to judge, for he alone has all knowledge. Who of us can estimate the force of circumstances, the effects of inheritance, the intents of the heart? His knowledge is universal: it is not limited by time, by number, by space, or by degree. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv. 13).
- (c) He alone is not in need of judgment. The ultimate Judge is one who does not come within range of judgment. Any one short of this is not the final Judge.

II.—*We are not qualified to judge.*

- (a) Our judgment is warped by limited range of vision. We judge necessarily after the sight, seeing that we only know in part. Even effects we can only judge of partially: intentions we can judge even less surely: qualifying considerations we have neither right nor power to adjust.
- (b) Our judgment is warped by imperfections within. "He that is without sin, let him first cast a stone," does not merely express the impropriety of judgment, but a disqualification for judging. Imperfections warp judgment: broadly, the presence of sin within damages spiritual perception.
- (c) Our judgment is warped by partiality. Who of us can say that his judgment is in any case entirely impartial? Prejudice for or against, preconceived impression, the tendency to be biassed one way or another by the one-sidedness of human character and development.

III.—*"And ye shall not be judged."*

- (a) There is a judgment on rash or partial judgment. We shall have enough against us in our last judgment, without adding the impertinence of having sat in the seat of God, and the breaches of charity in harsh and unnecessary judgments, and the errors in judgments which ought never to have been made.
- (b) Consider the responsibility of the evil effects on others of unauthorized judgments. The most obvious examples are in the condemnation of others, which have been accepted by them as true, and wherein they have acquiesced to their own damage, or which they have resisted in bitterness and hatred. But take a broader view: what harm is daily done to others by rash judgment on history, poetry, or art! A man's mental development may be warped by another's false judgment, who has power to influence his life. Truth is sacred. There will be a judgment on all such judgments.
- (c) We shall be judged for the deterioration of our own character produced by the habit of judging others. We have only a limited capacity for judgment; if we spend it on others we shall have none left for ourselves. Better utilize that limited capacity on one's self: we shall be the less ready then to judge others: and criticism is judgment.

Blind Leaders

FOURTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Can the blind lead the blind?"—S. Luke vi. 39.

Picture: the scene.

Pray: for all leaders in Church or State.

I.—*The words in the N. T.*

- (a) Rom. ii. 19 is probably a quotation from a familiar saying of our Lord, which was already a Jewish proverb. He was wont to speak in colloquial language, with homely illustration and popular proverb. Truth must be made real to ourselves and to others in language which is intelligible. Conventional religious phraseology soon becomes lifeless.
- (b) S. Paul's sources of information of our Lord's teaching were oral instruction helped out perhaps by collections of short sayings, and diligent use of the opportunities which he had of asking eye-witnesses for personal recollections. His writings probably contain many indirect quotations which we cannot trace. His thorough intimacy with the O.T. illustrates how diligently he would have studied the four Gospels had he possessed them.
- (a) S. Matt. xv. 14 and xxiii. 16 ff. suggest that the words "Blind guides" may have been often on Christ's lips, as giving expression to an important truth. The various contexts illustrate the history of the composition of our Gospels. Here, as in other cases, the divine revelation has been entrusted to earthen vessels; God works for man through men. But what if the human leaders be blind! The perfect revelation is enshrined in the Man.

II.—*Blind.*

- (a) There is a natural blindness, unilluminated by the Spirit, in which state one cannot see the things of God. Pharisees exhibited it in the orthodoxy of form, substituting the commands of men for those of God, honouring God with their lips while their hearts were far from him (S. Matt. xv. 1-14), straining out the gnat while swallowing the camel (S. Matt. xxiii. 24).
- (b) There is a blindness of prejudice which the rabbis manifested against our Lord, because he was not from their schools, and the Pharisees because he did not respect their shibboleths. The disciples showed it when they would rebuke one who did not follow them.
- (c) There is a blindness of spiritual pride, such as the Jews manifested towards the Gentiles (Rom. ii. 19), a blindness which is confident that it sees (S. John ix, 39-41). It is to be seen in self-assurance and self-complacency: it desires to lead, and drags others through the ditch, confident that they are on the high-road.

III.—*Blind leaders.*

- (a) All leadership is sacramental, a means whereby God communicates himself to another. Leadership which ends in self is blind. There must be leaders; let them fear, and efface self. The purpose of leadership is to assist others to see their own way; it is not to gain disciples, or to obtain a following.
- (b) Some are tempted to assume leadership by a mistaken view of sympathy; they only increase the weakness of the weak by inviting them to lean upon another's strength. They minister to the scrupulous by inviting them to talk about themselves. Or being in the ditch themselves, they think to help others out by the sympathy of mutual experience.
- (c) Consider the dangers of leadership, and make them an incentive to progress. How can one lead whither one has not first been led? Pray much, that if you are called to lead, you may not mislead, or bind to yourself. You are not bidden to lead that you may receive the reward of proselytism or gratitude.

The Discipline of Suffering

FOURTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."—Rom. viii. 18.

Picture: the sufferings and the triumphs of the saints.

Pray: for grace to receive your trials as a mark of God's favour.

I.—Consider the elevation of the Christian.

- (a) As to his outlook. He has taken a wide survey, which includes two worlds and a future as well as a present. God has opened his eyes to see the things which are invisible. It is the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ which makes this revelation to the humblest of his servants. It has nothing to do with natural gifts, or with theological knowledge.
- (b) As to his estimate. In that light he forms his estimate of all things, and it will differ widely from the estimate of others who do not thus see. Hence arise many of the sufferings of Christians; they are misunderstood. Seek grace that you may not be unnecessarily misunderstood, and that you may persevere against the temptation to falseness through a spirit of cowardice.
- (c) As to himself. He dwells much upon the glory which is about to be revealed to him, so that he may not, when under pressure, estimate the present more highly than the future (Heb. xi. 24-27). He thanks God, whenever he gives him grace to suffer as a Christian, because he realizes the privilege of fellowship with his Saviour.

II.—Consider certain examples.

- (a) S. John Baptist suffered for the truth's sake. The world is saved from ruin by the testimony of those who see two worlds. This is the peculiar suffering of many of the parochial clergy from the worldly character of their congregations. And it is the suffering of all those who will not conform to the world's standard in spiritual matters.
- (b) S. Peter suffered directly for the testimony of Christ, and we know what was his experience. He bade his fellow-sufferers rejoice in that they were partakers of Christ's sufferings, and would be sharers in the joy of his glory (1 S. Pet. iv. 12-14). Direct persecution often seems to us as though it would be more easy than resistance to the world's standard; but who of us has not failed to bear witness to Christ before men who think that it is folly to care for his honour?
- (c) S. Paul's life is sufficient evidence of his sufferings as a Christian—of those which came upon him from the heathen, from his own countrymen, and from fellow-Christians. We cannot consider too often how it was possible for him to endure so much; and we may be sure that it was terribly difficult for him. It is a great mistake to think that a saint does not feel suffering. But for the secret, see 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

III.—The sufferings of Christians build up their spiritual life.

- (a) S. John Baptist, whose life was in the open deserts, was confined in the close prison, and removed from the activity of public work to be disciplined by isolation. He who could bear testimony in royal courts was tried by the test of bravery under apparent desertion by Christ. Hear the testimony of Jesus Christ concerning his servant, when we, who demand so much of all men except of ourselves, would say that he had doubted (S. Matt. xi. 7-11).
- (b) S. Peter, the enthusiastic and impulsive disciple, was denied at the time the martyrdom of S. James, while expecting to share it. His was the harder lot, to appreciate both S. Paul and the Jewish Christians. His epistle is the fruit of his discipline in character (see 1 S. Pet. ii. 19 ff.).
- (c) S. Paul had infirmities of temper, increased by sickness. Persecution, defiance, temptation to conformity with public opinion, whether of the world or of the Christian society, did not move him. He was not one who could naturally suffer fools gladly, or bear with the feeble, or have patience with those who differed from him. But his Christian sufferings refined his character, and the care of all the Churches made him more gentle. Learn thus to regard Christian sufferings as the goodness of God taking you by the hand and leading you through the perfecting of character unto his eternal glory.

The Beam and the Mote

FOURTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then—."—S. Luke vi. 42.

Picture: the blind oculist.

Resolve: take heed to thyself.

I.—*The context and present times.*

- (a) The connection with judging another is very close, and still closer in S. Matthew (vii. 1 ff.). The perverted organ acts perversely: the short-sighted man always complains of the bad light, the deaf man that people will not speak clearly. We judge another, and even criticize his mote, and consider ourselves the fitting persons to remove it, because of our ignorance of self.
- (b) This divine criticism on human life is not to be limited to a fancied blatancy of hypocrisy in Christ's own time and country. We may boast that to-day at any rate we are not "hypocrites"; but we have the worst hypocrisy, the unconscious hypocrisy of self-deception. We may have the best intentions in the world, and never have examined ourselves by the full light of God.
- (c) And modern English religion favours this hypocrisy of blindness. We all want to do something for God, and have not even troubled to suspect the beam, or even to think that it would much affect the sight. We think that it is morbid to look at self, when it is more healthy to be doing something. And modern thought encourages this; it says that sin is merely a disfigurement of the imagination, and that we should give up thinking about it, and set to work to put the world's environment in good order.

II.—*The beam obstructs the vision.*

- (a) But sin perverts the vision. If sin were a mere act without effect upon ourselves, if it had neither past nor future, if we could put it away as though it never had been, all might be different. But consider that this is as if one should say to a man who became blind from defective constitution, that his blindness did not affect him now, because it is ten years ago that he went blind.
- (b) If our own sight is obscured, do we see clearly what to aim at? Unconsciously we substitute human ideals for divine, because, instead of seeing God, we see only a god whom we have made out of our own construction. Nor do we see others as God would have them, or as God sees them in relation to his world, but only in relation to the world of our own ideals.
- (c) Nor do we see how to pull out the mote—a delicate task. It is as though a blind oculist were to attempt to do it, and probably ruin the iris. There is danger, too, of mistaking a beam for a mote, and trifling when a serious operation is required.

III.—*Cast out first; and then—*

- (a) Spiritual vision is dependent on the sight of God. It is in his light that one sees. And it is the pure in heart who see him. Truly one must know God before one can help one's brother; one must know not about God, but himself. And to know himself is to know him in relation to one's self, as Pardoners, Illuminators, Guides, and Strengtheners.
- (b) To know God in relation to one's self is to know the Father. And to know the Father is not only to know him in relation to one's self, but in relation to others, and ourselves in relation to them. God, who will only dwell in the heart which he cleanses, and who retires from the heart which is not contrite or humble, leaving darkness behind him, alone enables us to see as he sees. Psychology is not another name for the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.
- (c) The meditation began with the connection of these words with "Judge not." Let it close with their connection with "Be ye merciful" (S. Luke vi. 36). To have God, as Father, cast out the beam, is to learn his mercy. We shall not cast out others' motes without that mercy which is the fruit of his mercy to ourselves.

Sin finding you out

FOURTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Be sure your sin will find you out."—Numb. xxxii. 23.

Picture: had the eastern tribes not helped in the conquest of the west, such bitter feeling would have been aroused that when later, in the days of the Judges, the east was oppressed, they would have looked in vain for help from their western brethren.

Resolve: to examine my penitence.

I.—Consider the words.

- (a) Not "will be found out," but "will find *you* out." The former is a piece of calculating prudence and bad morality: the latter is the divine vengeance.
- (b) We should be thankful for our sins to be found out: and it is often God's merciful way of making us face facts. To have done wrong and to dislike to be found out betokens a state of insincerity or cowardice.
- (c) Yet often we do fear exposure, punishment: we do not fear sin. Pray for a horror of sin.

II.—Sin as an intruder in the realm of one's life: at last, as it moves about there, it will one day discover you.

- (a) There is an ignorance of self: a self-humbugging: not yet got down to the *you*, but playing about superficially with one's fancied self. Peculiarly is this the case with sins of pride, and pride is the most subtle of all sins.
- (b) One happy case of getting to the *you* is in conviction of conscience. But this is not a case of sin finding you out: it is God finding you out through your sin. When sin finds you out it is in ruin, despair, an irretrievable past. S. Peter illustrates the former, Judas the latter.
- (c) It is the habit of sin not to find one out quickly: not until it cannot be thrust aside, because it has taken up its abode with us, and become one with us. If it obtrude itself, while yet God's voice can be heard in the garden of the soul, it is found out and not you: and then *it* is lost. Probing of self, close investigation of motive and action, following up of any suspicion of a spiritual sin walking about in one, will often find out sin for one's self. This is to be in the way of salvation.

III.—Sin finding you out.

- (a) By being treated as you have treated others. Jacob's sin of deception found him out when his sons deceived him. The selfish man thinks no one else cares about him: and he is partly right; his selfishness is a hindrance to the affection of others. So with the cold or reserved man. The sin is beginning to find him out, but the man does not yet understand what is going on.
- (b) By the growth of a false or superficial character, until at length one cannot be otherwise. There is such a thing as to lose reality: then a man cannot repent. One may become so false with God as to be unable to recover: so superficial as to be unable to launch out into the deep: trifling may become a fixed habit: carelessness may grow into the constitution: from not *loving* the truth one may grow into not being able to see it.
- (c) Two punishments attach to sin—eternal and temporal: the former belongs to unrepented sin, and its final state is hell. It is reality there. At last it will find *you* out—there. But forgiven sin has a temporal punishment only; it finds you out in deterioration of character: in severe cases it may be in the form of a lost vocation: I might have been that; I must now be content to be this. In less severe cases, in imperfections of character, habits difficult to overcome, temptations made stronger, will weakened, spiritual desires dulled.

Forgiveness and Punishment

FOURTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Thou forgavest them, O God, and punishedst their own inventions."—Ps. xcix. 8, P.B.V.

Picture: the harmony of religious experience in all ages. The psalmist praises God for his loving correction (Ps. xviii. 35, P.B.V.), and the apostle speaks of the chastening of God's love (Heb. xii. 5-11).

Resolve: not to rebel against the punishment of sin.

I.—*Forgiveness.*

- (a) Forgiveness is restoration to peace with God. Seek to raise the heart above the desire of remission of punishment to that of peace with God. Pray for spiritual illumination to desire God himself purely.
- (b) Eternal punishment is the loss of peace with God, which is eternal in character. It is not so much that with forgiveness God remits the eternal punishment of sin, as that restoration to grace is the withdrawal of the sinner from that state of separation from God, which is eternal death.
- (c) To appreciate at all adequately the joy of forgiveness one must have gone on to know the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Heb. xii. 11). He whose soul is truly athirst for God may hope to begin really to dread sin as the devastation of being separated from God. Resolve to make zealous progress in spiritual life. Ask God to deal with you as with sons.

II.—*And punishment.*

- (a) The forgiven heart has all that it desires in the restoration to union with God. In the love of God unimpeded is all the mystery of the soul's education. But self-will often rebels against the work of grace. Pray God to chasten you for your good.
- (b) This divine punishment of grace is always remedial, never revengeful. Often it is the natural consequence of sin from loss of grace and deterioration of character. By cheerful acceptance of it we recover what has been lost, especially by learning humility and self-distrust. But higher than this it is when God can trust us, and can put yet more on us for our quicker growth in grace. It is the saints of God who suffer most chastisement in spiritual life (see Heb. iv. 12).
- (c) Sacramental penance is the acknowledgment of the willingness of the forgiven sinner to submit himself to God's chastisement: he has come seeking forgiveness and not escape from punishment. Our penance is often very light that we may realize how great are his mercies, and that it is the state of our heart towards God which is of moment, and not the amount of our penance. Sometimes it is more heavy when it is directed specially to our reformation.

III.—*The way of temporal punishment.*

- (a) By it he draws to himself the heart which submits to his correction, and he breaks it away from its lingering sins. Many make little progress because they are content so long as they are not cast off from God, and cannot bear to endure the divine contradiction of their will.
- (b) But this temporal punishment must be undergone before we can see God in his holiness, because it is nothing else than the perfecting of our character. If we will not submit ourselves now, because we do not hunger and thirst after righteousness, we delay our preparation until he deals with us beyond our present life.
- (c) It is a mistake to suppose that every sin permanently deteriorates character in this life. Such a thought would check progress. True contrition, devotion, charity, mortification, surrender to the divine service, and above all fervent love to God, may even restore the years that the locust hath eaten (Joel ii. 25). Some hearts which have sinned grievously grow rapidly in supernatural grace, because they yield themselves unreservedly into the hands of God.

The First Crises in the Church

FOURTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"And kept back part of the price."—Acts v. 2.

"There arose a murmuring."—Acts vi. 1.

Consider: the contrast between the scenes.

Examine: your sincerity.

I.—*The earliest interior crises in the Church.*

- (a) The one was the sin of spiritual insincerity, and the punishment of it was appalling. The other was an infirmity of human nature, and it was dealt with by a broad-minded, liberal-hearted exercise of judgment. Both may at times have seemed to strike a discordant note, as though there should not have been troubles so soon.
- (b) On reflection we are satisfied that the Church must have had such scenes from the first. And any missionary can enter into them. He knows how much there is which has to be covered by a large charity, because it is due to the past non-Christian life. His converts are babes in Christ. And then there is the sin which has to be dealt with that the soul may be saved in the day of judgment, and that the others may fear.
- (c) We suffer much in England because the lapse of discipline has brought it to pass that there is no standard of Christian conduct. In the Prayer-book we are taught to desire the restoration of discipline; but until we preach the fear of God and the gravity of sin, instead of only being shocked by what is opposed to respectability, there is no prospect of any change.

II.—*The sin of Ananias and Sapphira.*

- (a) They were under no obligation to sell their land: having sold it, they were not obliged to give the whole price to the poor-chest. But they desired to have the credit of not being behind others in their spiritual life, and yet they could not part from all. It was a grievous and public playing the fool with God; it was a dreadful hypocrisy.
- (b) In times of spiritual elevation such sins are sure to be committed. In missions there will be insincere conversions, a sentiment without the true putting away of sin. What priest has not known of confessions which omitted the one really grave sin? In the earliest days of the Church the elevation of its life could not fail to produce such a case.
- (c) And it is when we aim high that we are most in danger of this sin. We vow that we will give God all, and we keep back part of the price. We will be God's priest, but we do not like to go abroad. We will give God all—except our wills. We give him all, and then grudge the price, and so never know the joy of giving.

III.—*The murmuring.*

- (a) The Greek-speaking Jewish Christians thought their widows were neglected in the almsgiving which was the fruit of this fervour that prompted Christians to sell their lands and houses. It was due to the old friction between the Hebrew-speaking Jews of Jerusalem, and their more hellenized brethren of the provinces.
- (b) The apostles apparently did not investigate; they recognized facts, and they showed no jealousy. It was a case for removing the cause of friction rather than for rebuke. With great liberality they appointed seven, all from the Greek-speaking Christians. It is only the Holy Spirit who can teach the Church when to rebuke or punish, and when to meet the case by a wise act of tolerance.
- (c) At first some of the Christians may have been tempted to groan over the flaw upon their perfection. But Almighty God showed that he expresses his will through the chequered history of the Church. In the one case great fear fell upon all; in the other the apostles were set free to give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.

Life's Depths

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Launch out into the deep."—S. Luke v. 4.

Picture: yourself standing with the frail boat of your life at the edge of the vast sea on to which the voice of God calls you.

Pray: for reality and depth of character.

I.—Consider the deep of life.

- (a) It is an awful thing to find life to be trivial, to be superficially minded. Life is a vast undertaking in action and thought, and the will must be set. Consider life as a great venture: the voice which calls is the voice of the Maker of the boat, who knows its frailty and its capacity; and he is also the Maker and Controller of the mighty ocean.
- (b) Launch out therefore with confidence in Almighty God, instead of always hugging the shore of spiritual symptoms and shallow experiences, seeking the aid of earthly props. Away with the feeble thoughts, "I should like," "I will try." Say, "In the Name and in the strength of God I will go forth." "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?"
- (c) And the launching forth on life is the exploring of God. "The voice of God is on the waters." "Even the waves and the sea obey him." "God sitteth above the water-floods." Life's venture is just the proving to yourself whether you believe in God: either he is able to make all things abound to you, he will direct your life aright, he is the Master who holds all in the hollow of his hand, or—he is not God.

II.—Make for the depths.

- (a) Do not fear the risks. Are you afraid of finding out how frail your barque is? It is more likely to be broken to pieces on the surf. Launch out boldly if you desire even to effect anything: the deep is the place for big hauls, and for the large fish. Or must you keep to conventional language and worn-out phrases of a past age, because you fear to look truth in the face? Leave your mooring; launch out into the deep: God is truth; the truth shall uphold you.
- (b) Do not be discouraged by past failures, because you have toiled all the night and taken nothing. All gain is won at some expense. It is worth much failure to have learned the inadequacy of one's natural gifts, and their sufficiency when employed at the command of God.
- (c) At some stages of life every duty seems to be a resignation. May I not even do this? Must this be given up? As one goes out into the deep the shores are gradually left behind: resignation is only setting the boat free to float on the open waters of God's ocean, wafted by the winds of the Holy Spirit. It is on the great waters that one sees the works of God and his wonders in the deep.

III.—Life's spiritual depths.

- (a) The deep knowledge of the heart. Do not neglect it in the triviality of little offences. Is it well with yourself? What of the life as a whole? Is it growing? Sin—have you dealt fully with that? Aim at deepening the souls of others: let them not rest in superficial satisfaction. Aim at spiritual things, not social conventionalities.
- (b) In the soul's discipline. There is spiritual dryness, desolation, affliction of spirit, the soul's disappointments. Or there may be neglect, love not returned, misunderstanding. Or sickness and pain, loss of power with advancing years. Why do we often regard these experiences as a mark of failure or of God's displeasure, and not rather as a reward? "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."
- (c) In the devotional life. Seek for deeper knowledge of God in meditation: make progress in prayer. By degrees God draws the boat of life away from human aids, in order that it may be committed entirely to his protection: to be losing the shore is the way to be buoyed up on the waves of God,

"Till in the ocean of God's love,
We lose ourselves in heaven above."

At thy Word

FIFTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Nevertheless, at thy word."—S. Luke v. 5.

Picture: S. Peter taking again to his boat.

Resolve: to listen more for "his word" of stimulus, when out of heart.

I.—*"Nevertheless."*

- (a) It expresses a constant element in life which tends to discourage perseverance and energy. Life is so balanced, that conflicting elements seem to contend upon an equality, and there is no preponderating principle. One sympathizes with the author of Ecclesiastes, that it is best not to be over good or over bad, for life seems to condemn high ideals as much as a wild defiance of her moral laws.
- (b) This sense of weariness and dulness is very representative of our time. The reverence of life is lost in the realized contrast between the littleness of our daily tasks and the vastness of life as a whole. Wider outlook gives the impression that Christianity is behind the times, and that the modern man must look for a larger solution. The rush of life removes the calm and reflection which in other days kept the mind well directed.
- (c) To the man who holds fast by God it is a continual warning not to trust to that which is temporal, but to believe in God with a larger faith which sees in the dark, which makes the whole of this life only the passing away of a shadow, and which estimates this life on so new a basis that what the world calls failure God may call brilliant success.

II.—*Apply to some Christian experiences.*

- (a) Many are depressed by the sense of not getting on fast enough; and it is often the expression of the weariness of a life which is struggling in its own strength. There is for every one the need of a strong vigorous religion which has God in it as a working reality.
- (b) Some find Almighty God in their hours of devotion and of special temptation, and of good works; but the round of daily duty seems to be a break in fellowship. They toil through all the night of duty with house cares, monotonous occupation, and uncongenial surroundings. Life just wants the touch of God's hand upon it in order to become "At thy word."
- (c) Or consider spiritual work, and be sure of hearing his word, whether in what one reckons failure or success; the man who throws the net cannot put himself in the place of him who brings the fish into it. Herein lies the great value of prayer in spiritual work; it calls upon the Master of the seas, and it stimulates the fisherman to go forth at his word.

III.—*Apply to the Christian revelation.*

- (a) There is much to be said against it; revelation might conceivably be clearer than it is; every generation seems to find its new thought antagonistic to Christianity. And yet—nevertheless, when not one portion of man, but the whole man, conscience and will together with reason, are called forth, there arises a strong conviction, and in short "At thy word I will let down the net."
- (b) The mission of the Church is very disappointing. Does it even hold its own? How many and terrible are the blunders and the blots in her history! The net seems a very poor one at times, and S. Peter a poor fisherman. But is it not a case of defeated yet always winning? The power remains through the ages; it is the form which passes away.
- (c) Both as a science of thought and a rule of life Christianity seems behind the times, and is sadly felt by some to be practically surpassed. It is depressing to those who believe and yet do not trust mightily in God. It requires a strong "Nevertheless," based upon "At thy word," in the conviction that he ordereth all things, and holds the worlds in the hollow of his hand.

The Christian fisherman

FIFTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*Fear not : from henceforth thou shalt catch men*" (R.V. marg. "*take alive*").—
S. Luke v. 10.

Picture : S. Peter the fisherman—

"The grace of the great Fisher
Called thee a fisher then,
To ply a nobler calling,
And search the depths for men."

Pray : for the preparation of the heart.

I.—"*Fear not.*"

- (a) A watchword of Scripture : Annunciation : the shepherds : Jairus : Easter morn : Paul in shipwreck : John in Patmos. The greatness of God and his revelation inspire fear, except where his character is perceived. So now S. Peter, overawed by the miracle, says, "Depart from me" : to whom Christ replies, "I need not depart, there is a more excellent way."
- (b) The word is "Do not continue in fear." First one must learn to fear God : there is too little of this now. Then one is not to stop there, but to pass on into confidence. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man" is a necessary preparation for the spiritual fisherman. If there is no fear of God, the sinner has not seen him : if the "Fear not" has not been heard and obeyed, the sinner has not found the Saviour.
- (c) The words are the inauguration office of the spiritual fisherman. He must shrink from the undertaking. "Who is sufficient for these things ?" "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips." When this is learnt he is ready to begin to fish in the name of God and not in his own. And he may not hold back : the word is "Fear not."

II.—"*From henceforth.*"

- (a) From the time of perceiving the divine majesty : he was astonished at the draught of fishes. From the time of perceiving himself : "I am a sinful man." And yet further, from the time of seeing these two truths in combination.
- (b) The Christian fisherman must learn to see souls, and the glory of God therein : he must see the draught of the fishes which have been caught at the word of God, and which the toiling all night did not catch. To learn one's own nothingness and his power is the secret of successful work, and the avoidance of the hideous snare of working for one's own triumph. What if the Christian is only making disciples of himself and not of Christ !
- (c) Nothing can be done permanently for the souls of men until the lesson is learnt that we can do nothing but put disciples into touch with God by bringing them and him together, and then annihilating one's self. He must leave God to work : most of his own work will be diving in prayer into the ocean of God's love.

III.—"*Thou shalt take men alive.*"

- (a) S. Peter was a fisherman : he knew that angling is a difficult task : through his fishing he learnt his lessons of spiritual fishing. In grace all human powers are raised to a higher activity : they are never lost.
- (b) Men. The whole of man in his activities and powers is claimed for God. Pray for a large sympathy with life. Man is complex : some try to catch the body ; the gospel of athleticism : some try education and art ; the gospel of culture : some try to get the soul ; the gospel of emotion. Jesus Christ, the great uniter, demands the whole of man.
- (c) Alive (see 2 Tim. ii. 26, R.V., the only other place where "to take alive" occurs) : it suits the simile of fishing. We have the gospel of life : there is nothing mawkish, sentimental, or weak in it. If it is not for one part of man only, still less is it for death that he is to be caught, for the asphyxiation of his activities. "Because I live, ye shall live also." The gospel embraces all the natural vitalities of man quickened into new force. Grasp the scope of the gospel, and then the words, "Fear not" and "From henceforth" become clear.

Partners in Place of Jesus

FIFTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"And they beckoned unto their partners."—S. Luke v. 7.

Picture: the two ships beginning to sink under the weight of Christ's bountiful supply.

Pray: that Christ may be all in all to you.

I.—*Dulness of spiritual understanding.*

- (a) How often may it be that God has great blessings ready at hand for us, but cannot give them to us because they would swamp us and make us ready to sink! We lament the paucity of our spiritual gifts, but do not use them to the full, nor pray that we may have grace to use his gifts aright, and to grow in grace.
- (b) How often too do we go forth in the name of Christ, only to be surprised that it is a name of power! We put down our nets for a draught, and at the back of our minds is the thought that "we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing." And this is not only so with regard to work undertaken in the name of Christ and for him; it is even yet more so in our own inner lives.
- (c) They had confessed the failure of their efforts; and now they were acting directly under his orders. Surely they would look to him for grace to carry them out! But they turned elsewhere in their difficulties; they turned to the help which was natural, and did not think of supernatural help. Thus slowly do we, in each application, learn the great lessons of God's sufficiency and God's supremacy.

II.—*Beckoning to the partners.*

- (a) There is much calling in of partners in life, and many of the partners are very excellent,—everything, indeed, that could be desired in partners; they are Christian friends, or a useful spiritual practice, or a good adviser, or suitable surroundings, or a spiritual director. But they are not Christ himself. Even sacramental communion can be misused, if Almighty God be known only as the forgiver of sins, and we are not learning from the experience of forgiveness that "When I am weak then am I strong."
- (b) We may make ourselves partners of others by reason of the gifts which God has given to us, if we allow others to lean upon us instead of helping them to rely upon Almighty God. There is such a thing as dominating another person's mind. Or we ourselves may be unable to stand without the support of another. That influence is safest which is exerted unconsciously.
- (c) We often call in partners to help us, which are found within our own person—resolutions, strength of will, or the feeble partners of hoping, going to try, etc. And all the while Jesus Christ is watching from the shore, that we may call on him for his help.

III.—*Learn the lesson of God.*

- (a) Not the most cherished friend can do more than put us into more direct touch with God; and all that we can do for others is to point out to them the way to risk all in taking him at his word. On the divine service we need a holy fear, lest we intrude ourselves. The larger part of such service is done by prayer.
- (b) This is the secret of ineffectualness in Christian life; the draught of fishes is there, but we do not haul it in with the strength of God. If we do not ask our partners to help us to do what we must do for ourselves, we do nothing and expect the net to land itself.
- (c) How easily is this truth lost sight of! Resolution and good intention break down. God does not break down. Apply this truth in private devotions, praying for grace to use God's strength, and not to lose thought of it in dependence on self-reliance. Then get up and use it. Talk over this matter in colloquies with God, and make repeated acts of intention, "In thy strength alone"; "At thy word."

The Broken Net

FIFTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*Their net brake.*"—S. Luke v. 6.

"*Yet was not the net broken.*"—S. John xxi. 11.

Picture : the two scenes.

Resolve : to examine my devotional exercises.

I.—*The net breaking.*

- (a) It is one aspect of the case. In any age, and in any part of the Church, there is damage and loss. Not all comes to perfection. We are conscious of the same in ourselves; even though there is—let us hope—some progress on the whole, yet we are aware that it has to be made against continual impediments in the way of lost opportunities and lapses more or less grave.
- (b) The greatness of the end should prepare me to face much loss in its attainment. It is thus that we reason in all human affairs; and if we do not do so in spiritual matters also, it is because we think of the individual rather than of the end or of the divine net-maker, who takes up all the tangled webs and broken threads and weaves them into his purposes.
- (c) The night of failure was followed by the morning haul. In our little lives we get discouraged over self and others, and over the Church: the reverse of the picture is lost to us. We are conscious of the broken net—Antioch, Rome, Canterbury; we feel bitterly the weak strands in our own fragment. But is the Master of the nets, watching on the eternal shore, doing nothing?

II.—*Connect the two scenes.*

- (a) The Church lives for the world. In the stress of active life, and influenced by the world's estimate, even the most loyal members are conscious of the temptation at times to lose the vision of the eternal. To some dispositions another temptation is more dangerous—to forget the mission of the Church and to live for one's own spiritual life. Meditation, rightly used, should be a spiritual equipment for service, and protect the Christian against losing the vision of God.
- (b) The Resurrection separates these two scenes, and we live in the second. Dwell habitually on the truths of the Resurrection, that the Church is one with the risen Lord, that the spiritual alone is eternal, and that the risen Lord is all-powerful. Meditation increases faith, and faith gives power to prayer, and prayer is the bringing in of the eternal upon human society.
- (c) We know—only too often, however, we forget—that every Christian has passed into the life of the risen Lord through baptism. But as it requires the grace of God to enable the Christian to see the spiritual life of the Church, so without this grace his own risen life sinks below its true level, and is lived in its own strength. One will find the risen power as one seeks to live by it.

III.—*The devotional life of the Church.*

- (a) The activity of life brings one into the strife of tongues; in the devotional life one turns to prayer and meditation. Activity exhausts, devotion refreshes. It is gross presumption to be too busy for the necessary equipment for work which comes from waiting upon the Lord.
- (b) The spirit of detachment is one great fruit of the devotional life, and attachment to God is the measure of attachment to his Church. One hears of organization, great preachers, large numbers; the Church worker of whom God approves is one who passes in and out between prayer and work as aspects of one life, and so comes from his devotional life into active work as a witness from another world.
- (c) As his life is established upon God, so he learns to see the Church under his care, out of weakness being made strong. He who grasps this, realizes that the Church in the power of God is manifesting itself through the sacraments, and he falls into the background that God may be glorified.

An Open Door

FIFTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*I have set before thee an open door.*"—Apoc. iii. 8.

Consider : S. Paul's life in Ephesus (1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9; Acts xix. 10).

Resolve : consecration of life for the world's sake.

I.—*The Asiatic society.*

- (a) Asia in the first century was very civilized; its great cities were full of trade guilds: social life had a great swing about it; there was much municipal and educational energy and life. It was not easy to live outside this life without incurring the odium of moroseness. And yet the life was almost intolerable to the Christians, being permeated with heathen associations and loose morality.
- (b) But what was to become of society? If the Christians avoided it, how could they leaven it? And in many aspects the heathen society was good; and ought Christians to stand aloof from what was good in it? And there was no Christian society large enough to offer a counter-attraction and a rival presentation of life. Hence the problem of compromise which the letters to the Seven Churches have scathingly denounced.
- (c) In his exile at Patmos life was too grim for world-attraction and its compromise. He saw the beast ready to devour the offspring of the woman; he saw the defects and blemishes which he scorched with his denunciation of Jezebel (2 Kings ix. 22) and Balaam (Numb. xxxi. 16) and the Nicolaitans.

II.—*The Seven Churches.*

- (a) We may learn much from these. Ephesus was like a modern rich and respectable congregation, wrapped up in its self-satisfaction. It was drily commended for a cold orthodoxy and a horror of all that was not safe. But it had lost its divine enthusiasm, and had settled down to live in upon itself, too much afraid of being contaminated to run any risk of doing good. Its candlestick was to be moved.
- (b) Smyrna and Philadelphia are the favourites; both are in trouble from the Jews. They both fully faced the world, went out into it, and were persecuted. The opposition here was too strong for any worldly compromise of Nicolaitanism. But over against them were Sardis and Laodicea, with no Jewish opposition and no Nicolaitans. And—Sardis was dead, and Laodicea was nauseous in its lukewarm insipidity. There was not even enough life for errors and exaggerations.
- (c) If in our days we have not life to be like Smyrna and Philadelphia, let us at least strive to be as Pergamum and Thyatira, which had their faults, for they tolerated the excesses of the Laodiceans. But Pergamum was redeemed by persecution, and Thyatira was progressive with last works more than the first. They were both alive.

III.—*The Church and the world.*

- (a) We are apt to think of the world-attraction as though it were entirely evil. The world ought to attract Christians. The Church lives for the world: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Where there is life the Church will insist upon going out into the world and will dare the risks. She will realize that her laymen, whose life is in the world, are her best missionaries, and that through them she has her open door.
- (b) And, if we are alive, the world attracts us because it is also so full of life, many-sided and human. The world has so much that is good in it, is full of interest, sympathy, and good desires. And Jesus Christ, by his contrast with John the Baptist, has taught us the highest consecration of daily life.
- (c) It is for this task, this responsibility full of danger and temptation, that the Church must brace herself by the consecration of life to the divine service in the world, seeing the hallowedness of daily secular occupation. God has given us an open door—and there are many adversaries. Consecration and prayer lest the Church tolerate Nicolaitanism.

Is Christ divided?

FIFTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Is Christ divided?"—1 Cor. i. 13.

Picture: the present state of Christ's Church on earth.

Resolve: loyalty to the Church.

I.—*The philosophy of history.*

- (a) The Church is the inheritor of Judaism—a reflection for the confirmation of faith. It is the sphere for the unfolding of God's purposes—a reflection to confirm our loyalty and to fill us with hope. In the Apocalypse the vision of the future is the ultimate attainment both of Judaism and of the Gentile world of the divinely purposed end (Apoc. vii. 4-9).
- (b) So, too, to S. Paul the ultimate issue is as much the solution of Judaism as of the Gentiles. The Jews are at present left behind; but God has not cast off his people. When the fulness of the Gentiles is come in the Jews will be roused. Thus at last will be unity. Oh! the depth both of the wisdom and of the riches of God! (Rom. xi.).
- (c) In contemplating the magnificence of the offer to the Gentiles, and of the fulness of the Jewish blessing, S. Paul was brought to develop with unparalleled boldness the idea and purpose of the Church. It is the interpretation of the wisdom of God to the spiritual powers (Eph. iii. 10); it is the manifold sphere of the divine glory (Eph. iii. 21); it will accomplish the gathering together of the totality of all things (Eph. i. 10), and become the final exhibition of the unity of the divine will, the justification of his purpose in creation (Eph. i. 22, 23).

II.—*The Church of Christ.*

- (a) The Church of Christ is, however, not this broken fragment of its life which we fitly call "militant," but the Church triumphant and quiescent as well as the Church getting into existence. We too often forget this when we presume to criticize God's Church. Such an object of divine preparation, and purpose, such a manifestation of the divine will, demands our reverence and devotion, not our scepticism and despair.
- (b) Is Christ divided? asked S. Paul very fitly of those who were forming parties. We have learned to think of ourselves only and not of God's purpose; to think of Christ for me and not of Christ for his Church; and in this shrinkage of faith into the narrow limits of our own selfishness we have all but lost faith in God. We forget the parallel history of Judaism, with its Church (Heb. xi.) lost sight of in the divisions and distractions of history, and its failure to receive the Messiah.
- (c) But never dare we acquiesce in a divided and distracted Church even on earth, we who can see something of the shattering of ideals, the weakening of forces, the enfeeblement of presentation. Never will we allow ourselves to think that this divided Christendom is the better state. But we will not lose faith.

III.—*Unity.*

- (a) So meagre is our faith, so feeble our loyalty, that we cannot see the truth of God through the tangle of human infirmities. Is the Church divided in heaven? Is the Church at rest divided? So then it is only one part, and that the imperfect part, which is divided. And this divided visible part—far the smallest part—how far is it divided? Is it divided up in heaven, when each section pleads the sacrifice of Christ at divided altars?
- (b) Again, when we pray for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here on earth, or for foreign missions, or for bishops, do we solemnly intend only to pray for those of our own communion? (And would God hear such prayers?) So the division bulks too largely in our minds. And even what remains is not altogether evil; it has at least a reality, a conviction of truth about it. And as in Judaism so here, God will not be frustrated by the inheritance of history and the imperfections of man in his elementary stage.
- (c) Truly looked at, Christianity has been one-sided from the first, a Gentile Church and not an expansion out of Judaism by the incorporation of the Gentiles. And S. Paul seems to say that Almighty God tolerates this, and will put it right at the end. And yet S. Paul spent years of his life striving to keep the small Christian portion of Judaism at one with the broad stream of Christianity.

Self-complacency

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees."—S. Matt. v. 20.

Picture: the opposition of the religious world of Palestine to Jesus Christ.

Resolve: to guard against self-complacency.

I.—*Scribes and Pharisees.*

- (a) They were the leaders of religion, and were accepted by their co-religionists as representatives. The standard was conventional, and the leaders followed it conventionally. It was not enough that they should commend themselves to the nation; it was their business to lead the people.
- (b) And there was earnestness among them: they were not conscious frauds; they were not bad men. But they lived in an age which had dragged down the spiritual to the level of commercial materialism, and as leaders they were responsible for this: the Scribes taught legalism for the law of God, and the Pharisees made a professional zeal out of the way of piety. Their earnestness was not enlightened: it was part of their reputation.
- (c) Apply these thoughts to the condition of religion in England; the zeal of the Pharisees and the literalism of the Scribes are still with us, manifested in a divided Church, with a conventional standard, a lust of energy. It seems as if we can only turn from the worldliness of the Sadducees to the partizan zeal and magnified importance over trifles of the Scribes and Pharisees.

II.—*Ingredients of the condemnation.*

- (a) A readiness to despise or condemn others. Jesus Christ's sympathy was with the simple-minded villagers: the official religion regarded them with contempt because they did not know what was correct. The technicalities of an ecclesiastical training were regarded not as an increased burden of responsibility, lest unreality should mar the spirit, but as a mark of superiority.
- (b) Self-complacency characterized the Scribes and Pharisees. It never dawned upon them, when they laid down the law, that they demanded more of others than of themselves; or that the marks of respect which they expected, were desired for themselves rather than for the glory of God; or that their ostentatious piety had any unreality in it (S. Matt. xxiii. 2-12).
- (c) They had the letter without the spirit, and had become the slaves of a professional system. Details and practices had been magnified into primary duties, until the principles were lost sight of—judgment, mercy, and faith. Such care was taken to set a good example, that the whole life became a show (S. Matt. xxiii. 23, 27, 28).

III.—*Some reflections.*

- (a) Danger lies near to hand when the outward observances of religion, invaluable as aids, are followed without continual fear lest the routine of habit should degenerate into a spirit of externalism. Examine the spirit of prayer, of fasting, of church-going. England is said to believe in the Bible: how far do we make it the rule of life? It is the duty of some to preach; have they first preached the sermon to themselves?
- (b) Religious atmosphere, pious language, emotional hymns, and stirring sermons are not religion. To test the worth of religion in your case, examine not the Sunday but a common week-day at home, at work, in charity, in temper. And test by comparison with your privileges and spiritual knowledge.
- (c) An average respectability without great effort does not exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. We deceive ourselves if we think that Jesus Christ condemned vulgar charlatanism: he condemned a self-deception into which it is easy to fall, because a superficial practice of religion by its teachers so lowers the public standard that no more than a conventional observance is expected.

Greater Charity from Sacramental Devotion

SIXTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"And there rememberest."—S. Matt. v. 23.

Picture: the scene as in the R.V.

Resolve: greater charity out of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

I.—Consider the words in their context.

- (a) The teaching was not new. "To obey is better than sacrifice." "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Yet the application had no more struck the Jews than it strikes us. It is quite true that one duty left undone is no reason for leaving another undone; but quite untrue to suppose that there is here any question of one duty and another. One cannot love God while one wrongs one's brother. It is not a sacrifice but sacrilege to offer to him while you owe your brother aught.
- (b) The words illustrate our Lord's attitude towards the law as holy and good. The sacrificial rites were to him the deepest expression of man's life in relation to the will of God. The ethical teaching of the law was transformed by the application of the eternal principles of life to the enactments which the tradition of man had made common and unclean. See for example S. Matt. xii. 1-3.
- (c) The unfolding of the law to the devout Jew was in relation to the family. Judaism exalted the family as does Christianity. And the family, the household, is the miniature of the nation. Israel is God's family. Hence the words, by the use of "Brother," give the heightened effect of the futility of making and offering to the Father while one is robbing the son of his due.

II.—Apply to the eucharistic life.

- (a) It lays down one great condition of sacramental communion; "Love and charity with your neighbours." And the importance of brotherly love has been heightened for Christians: he is the brother for whom Christ died. The Church is more than the successor to Jewish society: the Holy Communion is greatly more than the social family feast.
- (b) The collect emphasizes the love of God, the Epistle the love of one's brother. Holy Baptism is the mystery of the divine family, of which Almighty God is the Father, and we all are brothers. The death unto sin makes us fit to be members of this household of grace, in which the celestial food sustains us, if we be true members of the family.
- (c) But Almighty God will receive no bribery: there is no such thing as excusing ourselves for not loving our brother on the plea that we love God. For such is impossible. Nor may we neglect our duty to our brother because we would substitute a duty to God. Our first duty to God is to our brothers; while yet we cannot fulfil that without loving God. So delicate is the life of the true family.

III.—Freedom from scruple.

- (a) If "thy brother have aught against thee." Not if he thinks merely that he has aught against thee. There must be fault on your side, even though it be only the fault of a pride which takes offence at wrong. But if he refuse to be reconciled the fault is no longer yours; it is then he who is not brotherly.
- (b) "And there rememberest": though it be just at that moment when thou art offering thy gift at the altar. But if not remembered, then let the communion be a strengthening of charity to recall the fault, and to be reconciled. But consider that reverence to the Blessed Sacrament of love should make it impossible to forget grave breaches of love against a brother.
- (c) "First be reconciled—and then." The delay of reverence: not the neglect. There is no reverence in neglecting Holy Communion because one is not in charity: the continued breach of charity is also a continued insult to the Blessed Sacrament. The truth of the Holy Sacrament is an increased incentive to the reconciliation.

Christ's Intolerance of Sin

SIXTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"—Rom. vi. 2.

Picture: a Christian baptism.

Resolve: some specific amendment of life.

I.—*"Dead to sin."*

- (a) Behind our baptism lies death, the death of Jesus Christ. There lies the obligation and the power. If his death means anything to me, it means first that I am not to sin, second that I need not sin: it is not the toleration of sin, but its condemnation. We cannot live any longer therein, as in our natural home.
- (b) Baptism is the burial: people do not bury the living. Baptism is the personal appropriation of that death which we died with him. But it was not mere burial; for as he was buried to rise again, so we share with him that new life. S. Paul is not considering the future resurrection of the body, but the future of the logical consequence to death and burial with him.
- (c) The will co-operates, but it does not either produce the death unto sin nor give the new life. S. Paul bids us reckon ourselves dead unto sin (Rom. vi. 11) because we are so, not reckon ourselves so although in fact we are not. So he bids us yield ourselves as those that are alive. The Christian life is based on facts, not on fancies.

II.—*The Christian life and sin.*

- (a) Sin is the denial of the foundation fact of a Christian's life. It is the consequence of not reckoning the death, of not yielding himself as alive. Sin is the denial in practice of the belief in Christ's death and resurrection as appropriated in baptism. A Christian cannot tolerate the existence of sin in himself: he denies it as the experience of his life by a good confession.
- (b) He seeks absolution, for confession is not forgiveness: it is absolution which renews the baptismal covenant. By its gift, the death to sin, and the rising to life, are restored. Hence absolution breaks the chain of sin, and not merely remits a punishment: it renews grace, and especially the grace of fervour, and strengthens the resolution, because of the sharing in his resurrection.
- (c) Think more of the heinousness of sin and of the value of absolution. After wilful sin relief of the mind is helpful, advice may be useful, but absolution is the divine gift from which flows the fruitfulness of Christ's life. "In the cure of the soul pardon is only the crisis of convalescence: the restoration of health is sanctification: holiness is true life" (Godet). The practice of seeking absolution demands a high estimate of the gravity of little sins in view of the fact that the normal state of the Christian should be that of death to all sin.

III.—*Experiences of life.*

- (a) There is one stage, often painfully experienced by those who have not kept their baptismal grace, in which sin is not repugnant: one wishes to sin and even feels it hard that one may not. It is a dangerous state, although hopeful. It is encouraged by indifference to small degrees of sin, and by dwelling in memory upon past sins.
- (b) S. Paul's words savour of unreality if we are tolerant of sin so long as it is not heinous. There is a light treatment of sin which is an acceptance of the world's standard; and there is a light view of it which is manifested by an easy conception of forgiveness, and which does not feel the weight of sin. It enlivens the conscience to regard the truth of baptismal regeneration, and that sin is the contradiction of one's state.
- (c) While S. Paul thus wrote he had no false estimate of himself, nor placed before the Roman Christians any unreal aspect of life. He was answering the question "Shall we continue in sin?" It is acquiescence in sin which is the denial of the Christian's position. To be baptized makes this impossible except as a contradiction of one's baptism: it is a practical denial of sharing in the life of Christ risen.

Rejoicing in God

SIXTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Blessed is the people, O Lord, that can rejoice in thee."—Ps. lxxxix. 16, P.B.V.

Picture: the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts viii. 39).

Resolve: to seek joy where it may be found.

I.—*That can rejoice.*

- (a) Great difficulties in the way. We pay very little attention to it, and yet so much is said of it. Are we afraid of selfishness or of a too light-hearted religion? If so, we know very little of the way of Christian joy, or of its character. It is Jesus Christ himself who lays down the mark of joy as a fruit of true belief in him.
- (b) The Jewish religion recognized the place of joy, and found it increasingly difficult of realization; it requires close co-operation with God's will. They knew that it was dependent on the revelation of God's glory in their history, and into that revelation we have entered. Yet a depression has settled down upon us too, and we do not rouse ourselves to its cure.
- (c) The Christian finds real difficulty in rejoicing whenever he is at all self-centred, whether through sin causing him to fix his mind upon himself, or through selfishness whereby he seeks only his own good, or through an imperfectly apprehended gospel which his moral conscience approves, but which comes into his life without redemption and grace.

II.—*Rejoicing in God.*

- (a) It is easy to make an affectation of Christian joy, either by assuming a boisterousness of spirits, or by rushing into pleasures from a reaction against puritanism. One's first consideration must be whether one's joy is Christian, and then whether it is truly grounded in God.
- (b) To rejoice in God is to know him as one's Father, Jesus Christ as one's redeemer, and the Holy Ghost as one's sanctifier. Examine whether these revelations are a source of joy, or if perchance one is not too much neglecting them because of the assumption that one believes them intensely. It is very easy to neglect to make practical application of them.
- (c) Then see to it that one's faith in God is not falling short of life lived under his direction, with the constant sense of his approval and presence. It is easy to fall short of joy because one is content merely to avoid sin; easy even to think that to follow God more closely in fellowship would be to sacrifice joy. But this joy is a progressive experience; it cannot remain with the joy of the Ethiopian eunuch, but must pass on to the joy of S. Paul (Rom. xiv. 17).

III.—*"The light of thy countenance."*

- (a) The psalmist's words represent the ideal blessing to the Israelites. All that could be desired lay in this expression which told of manifested presence. It was thoroughly Jewish to regard joy as the condition of walking in God's presence, which we might rather regard as the result of it. The simile speaks unmistakably of reconciliation and peace with God, and to us Christians of the face of God as seen in Jesus Christ.
- (b) And to walk in this light is the daily cheering of life, illuminating the path one treads by the conscious realization of fellowship. S. John has described this to us in language which combines the thoughts of this meditation (1 Ep. chap. i.).
- (c) The secret of the Christian's joy is in a present blessing, and not in a future prospect merely. In God's presence is fulness of joy always. Can I rejoice in him? Give greater heed to his gifts, instead of always asking for something. Turn to him at all times instead of only in necessity. Pour forth your thanks and praise continually.

The Union of Christendom

SIXTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"—Acts i. 6.

Picture: the divided state of Christendom in the light of St. John xvii. 21.

Pray: for the unity of Christendom.

I.—*The desire for union.*

- (a) It is a right desire; the Church is the home of Christians, and they must love it, and loving it they must desire its perfection in all ways. Devotion to the Church is a mark of true discipleship. And this devotion must be cultivated by contemplation and prayer.
- (b) But mark the contrast between the disciples' mind and Christ's. They were thinking of an earthly monarchy for Israel; he purposed a spiritual kingdom, that is the Church. The larger purpose requires longer time. No union of the Church is according to the mind of God, which is brought about by private action, anticipating his will; or which provides a material union which is not the expression of a true spirit of union in the Lord.
- (c) Two conditions are required: truth and love. We must cultivate the latter in every possible way; we must hold the former jealously. There cannot be union where there is not love; there is not union where truth is not. It is of faith that by holding the truth in faithful lives we bring the union of the Church nearer.

II.—*Consider the mind of the apostles.*

- (a) Confidence in their Lord, while not knowing his mind, and while he seemed to reject their petition. And that confidence was manifested in the steady perseverance of their lives, which enabled them to enter more intimately into his mind. Nothing is dearer to the mind of our Lord than the oneness of his Church. That should give us great confidence in the hour of perplexity.
- (b) Simplicity with him, telling him what was in their mind, while accepting his answer as to the limitations of their spiritual perception. And the simplicity had its reward in the power which they received from the Holy Ghost. When depressed about the Church, her divisions, or her worldliness, or her afflictions, commune with him on the subject.
- (c) Desire to have the mind of the Lord rather than their own mind, as manifested in their apostolic obedience to his instructions (Acts i. 8). Impatience is at the root of most disloyalty to the Church.

III.—*Consider the Lord's answer.*

- (a) The limit of human sight is met by the obedience which follows upon confidence in his knowledge. "It is not for you to know . . . but ye shall be witnesses unto me." We can obey when we reflect that the times and seasons are in the Father's own power.
- (b) The gift of power in the Holy Ghost to be a fellow-worker in God's way towards this end. "Ye shall receive power." Even when our right desires seem to be checked, it is not so; they are only being directed towards the end desired, and which self-willed action would have thwarted. The apostolic labours stand out as the great work of the restoration of Israel.
- (c) The sphere of work: Jerusalem, Judæa, Samaria, etc. The whole scheme goes beyond, yet includes, their desire. But the individual part is small, and its contribution towards the whole may not be seen. Their work contributing to this end began in Jerusalem, their own city, and then spread to Judæa, their own country, and only thus advanced to further fields. Be faithful in the work allotted to you by God, and do not seek to forestall His will.

Self-Reliance

SIXTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"And thou say in thine heart, My power."—Deut. viii. 17.

Picture: some familiar example of self-satisfaction and confidence.

Resolve: watch and pray against spiritual self-reliance.

I.—*Susceptibility to this evil.*

- (a) It is a great snare to those who have been well brought up. They have not known disillusionment, for God has been in their hearts since infancy, and he has not been experienced as the rest of a consciously empty and dissatisfied heart. Nor is he strongly realized as the saviour of a sin-laden conscience. These Israelites had not been in Egypt.
- (b) A great danger, too, to one who has by grace overcome a specific evil habit. There may be a very natural sense of success, almost of triumph. And no doubt the disciple on the purgative road has done his best, fighting and watching as well as praying, as Israel, too, did its best under Joshua. So he may forget the grace in the consciousness of the struggle.
- (c) But, indeed, natural strength and success in any sphere may cause a sense of self-confidence to spread over the whole life, producing a conviction that one can do whatever one makes up one's mind to do. Pray for the young, who are naturally self-confident, and for the clever and the successful.

II.—*Special causes contributing to self-confidence.*

- (a) Forgetfulness of the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ (see ver. 14). Theologically his meritorious life and work may be accepted, whereas there may be no spiritual appreciation of it within one's life. Forgiveness, so far as it be a real experience, is associated with the renewal of resolution rather than with any definite sense of undeserved mercy; and original guilt is only vaguely realized.
- (b) The wilderness of life is not known as terrible; the fiery serpents and scorpions and the drought (ver. 15), because we are not bitten or parched, are almost disbelieved in. How easy it is to think that one is not easily tempted when truly it is that God in his great mercy has shielded one!
- (c) Forgetfulness also of the effect of grace (ver. 16). When the sacramental life is a habit, beware lest one be lifted up with pride, and think that it is because one is a good-practising Christian that one is diligent in one's communions, instead of humbly thanking Almighty God that the grace of the Blessed Sacrament has given perseverance.

III.—*The irrationality of self-confidence.*

- (a) It is the moral denial of Christianity. Our holy religion is not merely a standard; it is a power. At each stage it is the interaction of grace and faith. Self-confidence minimizes grace, and reduces faith to narrow limits. It is the spirit of Judaism without its excuse.
- (b) How absurd this little spirit of self-satisfaction and self-confidence must seem to the holy angels, who know that man cannot breathe, or will, without the grace of God, and who, being the ministers of God, see his goodness in restraining man's disposition, in guarding him from evil, and then find man taking the credit of it to himself!
- (c) Take heed lest thou fall! These spiritual sins, which ensnare the smooth lives of practising Christians, are the greatest dangers. The road to hell is not so surely along the paths regarded as those of wickedness as it is on the smooth way of self-satisfied conduct and contentment with one's stability of character. Learn to magnify the faithfulness of God, "for his name's sake" (ver. 18).

Singing with Praise

SIXTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"I will sing of the Lord, because he hath dealt so lovingly with me."—Ps. xiii. 6, P.B.V.

Picture: the joy of heaven.

Resolve: more acts of praise.

I.—*The Psalmist.*

- (a) The writer did not know God as he is made known in Jesus Christ; he knew nothing of the good news of redeeming love as the unfolding to the individual of his Father in heaven. And he is not one who has found life smooth (vers. 1-4). Indeed, such ripeness of character as these words reveal is not to be looked for in lives which have found out only the smiles of the world and the sunshine of human life.
- (b) And this Jewish believer sings because the Lord hath dealt so lovingly with him. One wonders in what way this loving dealing has been experienced. Many a man shares the experiences of the first four verses without finding in them the proof of any loving dealing. There must have been a great trust in God struggling against the temptation to think that God has forsaken him.
- (c) But this psalm explains the course of his history. In the long acquaintance with trial, during which he was almost overcome, he has maintained his trust in God's mercy (ver. 5). He has tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious. It is with him no conventional idea associated lightly with God; but a discovery of the fact. His heart is joyful in a salvation which he has experienced.

II.—*God's loving dealings.*

- (a) We, too, have our share in these trials. Almighty God hides his face, and the enemy seems to be triumphant. Have we a similar share in the experience of verse 5? There is a trust which amounts at last to a joyfulness of heart. God's loving dealings make great demands upon it, for they are made known through many trials.
- (b) Why not review his loving dealings, instead of reviewing the trials so repeatedly? Though one fall, has one been cast away? Though trials have been great, has he not brought one through them, and made life deeper, more full of sympathy and unselfishness? And can we not add some Christian loving dealings which the psalmist could not know, in which Jesus Christ himself has become very dear to us in gentle faithfulness, so that the very thought of him is sweet?
- (c) One is too much disposed to ascribe the trials of life to God, and to accept the many stretches of quiet without reference to him. One can be grateful to him for bringing one out of trouble, and yet forget to sing of him for the times between the trials; indeed, the trials often make one forget the other times. Why not try, when one is vexed in heart, to sing of him for the times which stand out in contrast with the present distress?

III.—*Sing of him and praise his name.*

- (a) To review his loving dealings would make one sing. The absence of thanksgiving for daily unrealized blessings, for spiritual blessings, accounts largely for the lack of singing in the Christian life. A joyful Christian is pleasing to God and helpful to man.
- (b) The Church provides plenty of singing in her worship: there is a large element of praise in it. Enter into its spirit of singing with no less fervour than into its prayer. Try the "General Thanksgiving," and make an act of praise over each clause. Do this once a week.
- (c) Praise the name of the Lord. This goes even further than singing of the Lord. Take Ps. ciii. as a model. Praise is the highest worship. We cultivate prayer: do we cultivate praise? Yet it is the worship of Heaven, to throw our crowns down before the throne and cry, "Worthy art thou, O Lord."

The Christian Worker depending on God

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Give ye them to eat."—S. Matt. xiv. 16.

Picture: the disciples feeding the people from their own basket of provisions.

Resolve: that all my Christian work shall be in dependence on God.

I.—*The miracle manifests Christ's glory*

- (a) In sympathy. The unselfish zeal which has caused him to preach to them again and again through these days did not absorb him in spiritual occupations so that he should lose consciousness of men's physical needs. He was thinking of them, and not of what great work he was doing. His own exhaustion only made him the more conscious of their need. Moreover, he knew what hunger was.
- (b) In love of order. He organized the distribution: he acted as host, his disciples as waiters; the people became his guests. He made the picnic a foreshadowing of the Eucharist. All order is symbolic, and it is the expression of harmony.
- (c) In power. With him there is no division between sympathy and capacity to relieve. And the manifestation of his power in this need was an aid to their faith in his power to relieve the spiritual needs which had been realized while he was preaching. So inversely do we, who know his spiritual power, learn therefrom to believe in his power to supply our material needs. "Give us this day our daily bread." If we all prayed that, our Christian brothers would not be left with outstanding debts.

II.—*Give ye them to eat.*

- (a) The Christian's duty. Every Christian has a basket of food. It is for himself; he does not carry about unnecessary graces. But he is under orders to distribute his own supply of food; he is God's agent waiting upon his guests in this wilderness. Only let him be a close disciple of Jesus Christ, and the supply will not fail; only let him distribute as Christ says to him, Give him to eat.
- (b) His basket may contain but little: he is not thereby justified in not distributing its contents. Seven loaves and a few small fishes may not seem much for thirteen; they seem ridiculously inadequate for more than four thousand hungry souls. But take warning from the one talent wrapped up in a napkin. Remember the effect of Christ's ministry on the basket store.
- (c) A motive for advance in grace. Christ says, "How many loaves have ye?" What if I must reply, "An empty basket, Lord; it was not filled this morning"! And our Lord is grieved and says, "I looked to you to feed these." Apply this to your communions and to your morning prayers.

III.—*Discipleship with Christ.*

- (a) Share his sympathy. Give him the joy of having your sympathy in harmony with his. Study him first, and from knowledge of him look at the needs of your fellow-men. By your own fulness in him appreciate the emptiness of those who will not follow him into the wilderness to be fed by him.
- (b) Lean on his power. Twelve disciples and four thousand men, and nothing but their own basket. Then ask him to bless, and you will find that when the daring task of giving them to eat has been done, you will have seven baskets left instead of seven loaves.
- (c) Appreciate the disciples' part. He bade them act, but they only acted as his waiters, as servants to his guests. True humility of spirit does not refuse to use the seven loaves; it obeys, not knowing how the loaves are multiplied in his hands, but sure that it is in his taking them that they have been multiplied. To him be the glory, who blesses the gifts.

The Word and Sacraments

SEVENTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"If I send them away fasting to their own houses they will faint by the way."
—S. Mark viii. 3.

Picture: the three days' preaching; now he feeds them. The Church has two breasts, with which she nourishes her children: the Word and the Sacraments.

Resolve: to use reverently the written word of God.

I.—*The Word. It embraces*

- (a) Doctrine, which corresponds to the intellect. Doctrine is the ordered exposition of truth, which the intellect receives and tests. Sound doctrine is of primary importance in every age: every Christian should be at pains to understand the faith; every priest is under solemn obligation to persevere in sacred study. An age in which the Christian doctrine as taught does not satisfy the intellect is the precursor of an unbelieving age.
- (b) Instruction in conduct corresponds to the will. The revelation of Jesus Christ is not like the propositions of Euclid, but is the revelation of eternal truth as regards life. The Creed is to be lived. Intellect and will should act harmoniously. If doctrine be separated from instruction in conduct the revelation of Jesus Christ is robbed of its chief glory, and its teaching degenerates into strife.
- (c) *Paraklesis* (exhortation, encouragement, etc.) corresponds to the emotions. Without this the revelation of the word will not reach the heart. Nor is that the full teaching of the word which fails to meet the whole man—intellect, will, and feelings. Private study of the word should include meditation and prayer with resolutions.

II.—*The Sacrament of feeding.*

- (a) It repairs the continual waste of life, as bread to the natural body; for the Blessed Sacrament remits venial sins and strengthens the disposition against them by the increase of grace, as natural food overcomes the petty ills of the flesh and disposes the body to resist them.
- (b) It builds up body and soul unto eternal life, being the gift of Jesus Christ himself, who is the Life, in body and soul, humanity and divinity. To be well nourished is to be full of vigour and healthiness of disposition: so the frequent communicant is strongly disposed towards what is good, and his heart is drawn towards his Lord with strong affections, while his intellect is sanctified, and rightly balanced by will and the senses.
- (c) The law of bodily nourishment has its counterpart in spiritual food; however excellent food is, if the body be diseased it will be unable to assimilate it: the Blessed Sacrament cannot feed a being who is not in condition.

III.—*The Word and Sacraments.*

- (a) The word without the sacraments is a return to Judaism; it is the law without the grace of the gospel. It is holy and good, but a yoke upon our necks which we are not able to bear. The revelation of the gospel is, "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." An unsacramental presentation of Christianity makes prayer into a sacrament, instead of the fruit of sacrament, the experience of fellowship.
- (b) Sacraments without the word are superstitions: the sacraments of the Church are themselves rational; but without the word they are lowered into charms of which the virtue is supposed to consist in the very fact that they are irrational. A revival of sacramental life in England is only to be sought in the combination of a will directed towards God and an understanding of the sacraments as the fullest interpretation of life and the satisfaction of man's ideals.
- (c) The two are closely related through the fact that the sacramental food sanctifies the intellect, purging it of pride, making clear the spiritual to it, and fixing the will. "That which God hath joined together let not man put asunder." To believe involves harmony of the understanding and the will. It is one great gift of Holy Communion that it thus strengthens belief.

Satisfaction in the Wilderness

SEVENTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*Here in the wilderness.*"—S. Mark viii. 4.

Picture : the contrast between the wilderness and Canaan.

Pray : "Evermore give us this bread."

I.—*The wilderness of life.*

- (a) The wilderness is not a place to live in ; it is a district to be travelled through, and with a purpose. Life is such an experience, which gains the character of a pilgrimage. We have no abiding city here. We are in it in order to pass through it. Have the mind fixed on the object of the journey.
- (b) But the wilderness is not without its purpose, any more than wildernesses are the mistakes of God's creation. He would have us not settle down to the wilderness-life as the height of our aim, spiritual bedawins. And yet he would allure us into the wilderness, and not have us regard it as the land of Canaan : he would speak to us apart in this experience of life's satisfying offers (Hos. ii. 14 ; S. Mark viii. 1-4).
- (c) Yet the wilderness of life's pilgrimage may blossom as the rose (Isa. xxxv. 1). It was in the wilderness that the children had been fed by the Father's food from heaven. It is when the wilderness is no longer a place to pass through, but is become our home, that we do not seek his sustenance, having become content with its meagre fare.

II.—*Hunger.*

- (a) We are inclined to think of hunger as an evil ; it is a great blessing. Without the sensation of hunger a man might easily neglect to support his body. It is a bad sign when a man is never hungry. What is evil is to be unable to satisfy one's hunger. Apply these thoughts spiritually.
- (b) The healthy man is very sensitive to hunger ; he eats with enjoyment, and his food nourishes him. Refreshed thereby he is full of energy. How often in the spiritual life our nourishment is not converted into energy ! How often we are insensible to hunger ! Even think that we can live on food which does not nourish, or without food, or on food irregularly taken and only when starving !
- (c) Now the hunger of the pilgrim is not to be satisfied with the fare which the wilderness provides. The bedawin may eke out a half-starved existence on the diet of the desert ; he has known nothing better, and he remains a bedawin. The pilgrim will sink exhausted if he have not his true diet, and which must be supplied from elsewhere.

III.—*Satisfaction.*

- (a) The life of the true Christian must be a healthy hunger for the bread of life, which is a hunger after righteousness. Such hunger is blessed, for it is a good sign, and because it is a hunger of the soul for God, and he is to be found even in the wilderness ; but the wilderness does not produce God. Pray for this hunger.
- (b) The starving bedawin does not think of other and better food ; he only thinks of having more of the scanty provision of the desert. The Christian is not a native of the desert, and he turns in the wilderness of life to the divine giver, that he may eat the food of his native land. And the food of the Blessed Sacrament does not make him despise whatever other nourishment is provided for him ; it increases his appetite for it.
- (c) If the Christian may not mistake the wilderness for his own land, yet neither may he grumble at the journey from Egypt to Canaan. The tabernacle of God is with him, the true tabernacle, and he has the oracles of God ; let him learn to appreciate these, and the watchful guidance of him that goes with him to show him the way (Deut. xxxii. 10-12).

The World pressing on the Church

SEVENTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"To make war with the remnant of her seed."—Apoc. xii. 17.

Picture: the opposition of the world-power to the Church.

Resolve: to think continually of the Church as God's revelation.

I.—*The vision in the Apocalypse.*

- (a) The Jewish Church is travailing with child. The red dragon is robbed of its prey, because the man-child is caught up unto God and to his throne. But the woman, who, after the birth of the Christ has passed in symbolism from the Jewish Church to the Christian, fled into the wilderness, and the earth offered her an asylum, and in the place "prepared of God" she realized the providence of her God.
- (b) The scene shifts. The woman has other seed, the offspring of the Church, for he is not ashamed to call us brethren. And, although the Church cannot be overcome, her members are subject to the wrath of the dragon. The enmity varies in its form; now it is the beast from the sea, whose name is Blasphemy, and there is yet another beast who comes up out of the earth, and is the false prophet (Apoc. xii., xiii.).
- (c) The world-power is the parody as it is also the rival of the divine kingdom. Rome against the Church, ruling the nations with a rod of iron (Apoc. xii. 5; ii. 27), with the imperial cultus (Apoc. xiii. 4, 15), over against the worship of Christ. The superstition of Nero's return (Apoc. xiii. 3, 12, 14; xvii. 8, 11) is the parody of the risen and coming Christ; there are the rival miracles (xiii. 13); and the mark of the beast (xiii. 16; xix. 20) is the counterpart to the Christian seal.

II.—*The world-power.*

- (a) The world still offers its kingdom and glory to those who will fall down and worship. We realize it in every generation, with the critical character of its tendencies, and the temptations incidental to its powerful influence; and the world still rules with a rod of iron through its self-made standard of right and wrong, and through the power of conventionality and public opinion.
- (b) Nor has the world-superstition ceased to be a power. Ephesian magic and legends of the return of Nero have passed into the conventional acceptance of Christianity, which regards baptism as a charm, and a Sunday church attendance as righteousness. It is not the Christians, who believe in grace, that are superstitious, but the world which has attached itself to the Church, and would convert Christianity into an easy passport to heaven, and make it a soothing drug.
- (c) And the world makes a very good parody of the Church, deceiving many thereby. It shows its best side, and carefully veils the price which has to be paid, until many say that they cannot see any difference between Christians and non-Christians, and that the world is a very satisfying place to live in.

III.—*Considerations.*

- (a) The pressure of this world-power upon us is very great, and we do not always realize it. But we are affected by it in the depression which grips us, and makes us incapable of expecting great things or any manifestation of the power of God. Many are of necessity brought very closely into touch with the world, and we, whose lot is more sheltered, must uphold them by our prayers. The world can rival us in energy and work; but it ought not to be able to rival us in unity, or in the power of prayer.
- (b) To the world the Church is an organized institution of human society. To the Christian, who has not been deceived by the world, it is the divine power of the living Christ. The woman in the Apocalypse was safe; it was only upon her offspring that the dragon could make war.
- (c) We are in danger to forget the great rival power. We should pray more continuously to believe in the society of God and its spiritual power. We should pray more earnestly for that intense reality which will make separation between Church and world. We should pray that the world may feel the Church of God and fear its power. We must pray that there be no compromise of principle.

My Neglected Vineyard

SEVENTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"But mine own vineyard have I not kept."—Song of Sol. i. 6.

Picture: the vinedresser who neglects his own vineyard.

Pray: for the increase of true religion.

I.—*To whom is this picture applicable?*

- (a) In a general way to all Christians. Correctness of external habit, and conformity to the observances of religion, may produce a spirit of self-complacency. This is a yet greater danger when neglect of penitence and to cultivate the spirit of humbleness towards God is leading one to criticize others. Do I think myself better than others?
- (b) More especially to the busy worker. It is false to the spirit of Christianity to be so busy that one cannot look after one's own life. We may cumber God with the excess of our own service as though he needed us. It is well often to ask one's self if one is not thinking more of what one does than of what one is; more of work for God than of the worship of God and the life of fellowship with him.
- (c) Particularly to those who have the responsibility to watch over others. There is a snare in thinking too much of setting a good example. Priests may very easily fail to keep their own vineyard because they are so busy with minding other people's. Parents may watch their children and neglect themselves.

II.—*God can prevent this.*

- (a) It is a great danger to be responsible for others, or to be busy about others. Life is not the sum total of external obligations and work. The first question to a priest should not be, "Are you a good visitor or preacher?" but "How many hours a week do you pray?" To a parent, not, "Do you teach your children the Catechism?" but, "How often do you pray for them, and for yourself as a parent?"
- (b) It is God alone who can keep the vineyard of one's heart, and cultivate it, that it do not get overrun by weeds through neglect. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," is not only sound advice to one who would learn the way of life, but lays down the principle of service for him who would do work for God.
- (c) The vineyard of one's heart is the place where God is to meet us. Shall we leave it even untidy, not cared for? Still less can we leave it neglected, grown over with weeds, undigged. And the vines want pruning. We are often very sparing of the knife in our own vineyard, and there is an excess of wood. Can he make it a garden of Eden as he walks there in the cool of the day?

III.—*Dangers of the neglected vineyard.*

- (a) The Church languishes from over-work, from feverish activity, and a restless desire to justify herself in the eyes of the world. We must recognize more than ever before the value of consecrated lives apart from any apparent usefulness. We suffer from a plethora of sound equipment and energy.
- (b) Holiness has a work which is not to be estimated by the shop-keeper's scales. To him who is called of God there is no labour for the Church at this time equal to that of the life of prayer and worship. But such is the restless superficiality of religion that one can look for very few such vocations; and it is so beset by temptation that to seek after the life of consecrated contemplation is very dangerous except in response to an irresistible call.
- (c) It is the blending of the two lives, the active and the retired, which Almighty God normally asks of us. If we are not worthy of contemplatives, we may pray for the extension of active communities, for increased cultivation of meditation and prayer in our parishes, for the growth of worship; and endeavour to respond by paying greater heed to the keeping of our own vineyard.

Readiness to forgive

SEVENTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."—S. Luke xxiii. 34.

Picture: the nailing of Jesus to the cross.

Resolve: greater readiness to forgive others.

I.—*Consider Jesus Christ crucified.*

- (a) Reflect upon his entire self-crucifixion. He has said, "Deny thyself and take up thy cross and follow me." Therefore see him. There is no thought of the injury which he is receiving, of the ingratitude of man, of his sufferings.
- (b) But he came to do the will of his Father. And he knows his will. Until Jesus Christ died no man would have dared to ask God to forgive those who killed the incarnate God, the only begotten Son. This word of Jesus Christ is the interpretation of the revelation of the cross, as the love of God and as the merits of Jesus Christ. He prays—the Son to the Father.
- (c) And he is at leisure on the cross to think of mankind, universally and individually. His thoughts are on those who are ignorantly crucifying him in obedience to their orders. His thoughts are on many in all ages who sin in ignorance and in thoughtlessness. They need forgiveness; they are not without sin because it is not deliberate, or not realized. But it is the divine Victim who prays for them.

II.—*We know not what we do.*

- (a) We do not know what sin does to us. How much harm it does to self, that it is not a mere act, done and done with, but has reacted upon one's self. We do not know that it is a symptom of greater evil within, which has merely given certain manifestation. We do not know how dangerous and how bad sin is for us, or how terrible it is.
- (b) We know not what sin does to others. We cannot trace out its consequences. Here and there in individual instances we see and are shocked; but what of other cases? We do not reckon the force of example, and how example and influence are weakened by the loss to our character through sin. We do not know what we might have been. Who can trace out even one sin in its positive and negative history?
- (c) We do not know what sin is in the sight of God: how hateful. Nor do we realize how much it involves of infidelity, rebellion, disregard of his love, despite to the cross, ingratitude to grace. Think of some recent sin: go to the cross, consider God's love, the Passion of Christ, and then say, "Shall I do this here and now?"

III.—*He knew and he prayed.*

- (a) Therefore have faith in God. Never let a sin or sins overmaster your faith. To rise up against the thought that God cannot forgive this in me or in another, and to say, "Yes—Jesus Christ has died, and has prayed," is to honour God and the cross. "Lord, increase our faith."
- (b) And he would have us share his charity: and not be ready to condemn even for his glory. Mercy triumphs over judgment. Plead his cross: stretch your charity beyond all human limits, and venture it by the merits of his charity.
- (c) But to share his charity we must receive his grace. And we shall know the need of this, when sharing his charity demands of us that we forgive them that trespass against us, put out of sight the injury that we have received and pray for him who did the wrong, that he may share with us in the grace of God.

The Discipline of Temptation and Trial

SEVENTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"And the Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little."—Deut. vii. 22.

Picture: the children of Israel brought into their own land, but suffering distress and temptation from the nations not yet cast out.

Prayer: to profit by the discipline of trial and temptation.

I.—*Three aspects of this situation.*

- (a) "Lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee" (Deut. vii. 22). The presence of trial, while providing the elements of temptation, is a hidden mercy. While as yet the regenerate heart has not had the experience to bring the whole land into cultivation, the removal of this incentive to energy may easily lead to the ravages of the wild beasts of the land.
- (b) "That through them I may prove Israel" (Judges ii. 22). This mercy which hides from the Christian the yet greater dangers from which he is spared, is at the same time a salutary discipline to his life. To overcome these nations by little and little was to be Israel's strengthening of character, a manful occupation, and a healthy training in opposition to evil. The Christian beginner, like the young schoolboy, is the better for having his battles to fight: so was Israel to be trained into a self-respecting nation by learning to unite in the face of the foe.
- (c) "They shall be snares and traps unto you" (Josh. xxiii. 12-13). This was an alternative. If healthy resistance gave place to the tolerance of indifference, and they acquiesced in the presence of foreigners who did not worship the God of Israel, then the nations would remain among them as a punishment.

II.—*Apply to the external trials of life.*

- (a) That which often perplexes as an apparent hardness of God in dealing with us is indeed a hidden mercy. It takes the attention off from the inner depravity, while it strengthens the character; and by fixing the Christian energy upon a manifest task, it delivers from the dangers of introspection and morbidness. Thus many lives grow more healthy in the presence of external temptations.
- (b) These trials and temptations, which are manifest, and their force felt, cause the Christian to put his whole trust in God; from them he learns the power of grace, and to know God as his God. Thus they are a means of grace, and the prudent Christian prays not for their removal, but for the gifts of perseverance and faithfulness.
- (c) But such trials may become the punishment of life if we make marriages with them; then they remain as snares and traps. Nothing is sadder than to see the struggling Christian in the midst of trials which have become strong temptations that he is no longer able to resist in the name of Christ, because he has so submitted to them that he can no longer defy them in his name. This is specially the weakness and misery of the hidden Christian who has not shown the nations of the world that he is not one of them.

III.—*Apply to interior temptations also.*

- (a) They too are to be driven out by God little by little. It is the conflict which is of value; if the evil spirit be driven out before the heart is filled with grace, and there be a life negatively Christian, content with the avoidance of that which it recognizes as sin, beware of the seven spirits which came to the swept and garnished house, worse than the demon cast out; the evil spirit of pride, discontent, self-assurance, and the like.
- (b) The perseverance of Christian life, fighting against interior foes that are recognized, is the gift of spiritual appreciation, whereby trial is made of God, and he becomes necessary to the daily life. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."
- (c) The interior trials may however be the snares and traps which were threatened to those who clave unto the remnant of these nations. Better so to know them as such than to be unconsciously within their power. Recognized as such, they have their disciplinary office in leading to deeper repentance and truer knowledge of one's evil heart.

Not Every One that saith

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."—S. Matt. vii. 21.

Picture: the five foolish virgins.

A resolution of a practical character suggested by the meditation.

I.—*The difficulty of entry.*

- (a) The Christian religion is positive: it is not content with forbidding certain acts. It asserts a positive principle, and demands an attainment. And its Founder has not hesitated to make this condition stringent. The gate is strait, the way is narrow. The path which leads to destruction is seductive.
- (b) The condition requires a high degree of genuineness, a singleness of purpose, and a unity of life. It does not demand a certain specific task, but it requires a loyal co-operation with the will of God in all matters. It is not to be wondered at if many have felt that few will attain, and if others have thought that the standard must be lowered.
- (c) To do the will requires more than a passive acquiescence in endurance, a fatalistic resignation to the inevitable. It will take the form, under certain circumstances, of an active co-operation of the will in endurance, but normally manifests itself in the vital energy of conviction, and the active exercise of principle. In no case is Christianity satisfied with negative colourlessness.

II.—*Saying versus doing.*

- (a) Various forms are illustrated by the teaching of our Lord. There are those who presumably always meant to accept his invitation, who have eaten and drunk in his presence, and who have felt pleased that he preached in their streets. But they have waked up too late to any serious perception (S. Luke xiii. 25-27). They give a formal, almost patronizing, approval to religion, but it is a religion of external adherence.
- (b) There are those who can urge very strong claims: they have prophesied in his name, cast out devils, and done many wonderful works (S. Matt. vii. 21 ff.). But they practised religion without being made religious by it. It by no means follows that a priest, a religious, a Christian worker, will not be found saying, "Lord, Lord," before a closed door.
- (c) And there are the foolish virgins, apparently meaning quite well, and indistinguishable from the wise ones (S. Matt. xxv. 1 ff.). But they did not watch wisely with due alertness, and thus they were taken by surprise, unprepared. All these are examples of those who fully expected to be admitted: so unlike those who shall say, "Lord, when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in?" etc. (S. Matt. xxv. 38-40).

III.—*The office of Holy Communion.*

- (a) The words are used for one of the offertory sentences. Their immediate relation would seem to be, therefore, to the social claims of Christian brotherhood. "I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me." But undoubtedly they are meant to bear a wider interpretation: "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (S. Luke vi. 46). A man's life should be his preparation for his communions.
- (b) The words in this connection suggest the case of those who desire to do the will of God, and yet neglect this special command, from some misunderstanding of its purpose, failing to see his great gift of generosity, and misinterpreting it as an external act to be rejected because many misuse it. Pray for such, that they may have the humility to act upon his divine order.
- (c) There are many communicants to whom the words contain by anticipation a terrible judgment. "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence," and he shall say, "I know you not whence ye are." And what is this warning to those, who, believing in the Blessed Sacrament, and assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, are too careless to prepare themselves for more than a very occasional communion?

Sonship

EIGHTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*The spirit of bondage :*" "*the spirit of adoption.*"—Rom. viii. 15.

Picture: the slave and the son in a household. In the Christian household the sons are also slaves.

Pray: for development in the spirit of sonship.

I.—*The Master-Father.*

- (a) At once sons and slaves; the two are not incompatible. And it is not the Master-Father who changes, but we, who are to develop the spirit of adoption until the absolute and prompt obedience of the slave shall be performed in the perfect confidence and freedom of sons. (See Gal. iv. 1.)
- (b) The training of a son requires more than that of a slave. The difference, however, will not be in relaxation of authority but in adaptation of it to the wider ends of heirship and citizenship. For the son is not one whose privilege it is to dishonour his father by disobedience, but one who has boldness before him, because his father in proportion to his understanding opens his mind to him.
- (c) The master is first in regard to his slave: the father puts his son first in his mind, because he is the dearest part of himself. To do the will of God because it is his command to his servant is for us to find out that the imperative order is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. In doing his will the paradox is realized of the liberty of slavery and the bondage of sonship: in this the willing slave realizes his sonship.

II.—*The duty of sonship.*

- (a) Its effort. Not easy to live up to the high position of adopted sons. The will must dare to insist upon the sonship in order to find that the relationship is not a simile but a blessed fact. There must be the effort both to cast aside what is not befitting and to appreciate the higher claims and attractions.
- (b) Its responsibility. When God calls us sons he means that all the world should know that we are such by reflecting the Father's nature. Since he has made us inheritors of the saints and martyrs, we cannot hang about listlessly in a world of aliens which is not capable of seeing the great vista spread out before us.
- (c) Its obedience. The slave obeys his master's will because it is his master's: the son obeys his father's will and makes it his own: his ideals are the same as his father's, so far as he can understand them. This is the spirit of adoption; we are only bidden to bring out into activity what we have been made. The son and heir in his father's house honours his father in the presence of all by a prompt and hearty obedience, in the spirit of utmost loyalty.

III.—*The position of sons.*

- (a) The character of sonship. The character has been impressed in the new birth of Holy Baptism; we may storm heaven's gate with it. Use it we must. When restless, go straight to the Father and tell him all about it. When anything is difficult, we have a right to tell him so and to claim that he remove the trial or give strength for it. We have a right to claim his presence, and that he do not leave our natural will unassisted.
- (b) The freedom of sonship. It is no one's freedom to do wrong; but it is the freedom of sons to move about within their father's will and feel no restraint. It is no freedom if a father leave his son to choose the way of perdition: it is freedom to know that what the father wills is directed to the son's highest good, and that even his sternness is the expression of his deep concern for the son.
- (c) The spirit of sonship. The adoption has given us the impetus of sonship. We may make many mistakes from not knowing fully our Father's will, or from forgetfulness; but the spirit is strongly filial, and on this spirit we must draw, till it gain full possession, casting out the spirit of bondage. And if at times the son really sins, he will know that he is a son, for the sin will hurt the son's heart within him.

The Sanctification of Natural Character

EIGHTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—Rom. viii. 14.

Consider: the apostles James and John as illustrating the vital truths of the Epistle and Gospel for the week.

Prayer: for sanctification of natural character that the purposes of God for us may not be hindered.

I.—*The sons of thunder* (S. Mark iii. 17).

(a) The inner circle of three have significant titles conferred upon them. Peter and John are indeed to us leading apostles; S. James passed away too soon to leave a mark upon history which we can interpret. Learn from him to appreciate more highly the value to be ascribed to single-hearted devotion to and fellowship with the Master; these three learned early the spirit of adoption. And consider the glory of being a joint heir with Christ in his sufferings.

(b) The title of the Rock suggests to us that at any rate in the case of Simon it was indicative rather of his place in history than of his natural character. His impetuosity with failure in courage are not rock-like. The sees of Antioch and Rome are historical interpretations of his name; but S. John and S. Paul may appear to us greater men than S. Peter. He who sitteth above the water-floods orders all things according to his will.

(c) In the sons of Zebedee there seem to be natural traits of character which are appropriate to the title, when we regard the request to call down fire upon the Samaritan village. S. James's death was probably the result of his bold utterances, and S. John in some aspects illustrates the character portrayed in the title. Yet with them too it was probably expressive rather of their place in the Kingdom, in which the one thundered through the shock of early death, and the other with the heavenly voice of divine revelation.

II.—*The sanctification of character.*

(a) These thoughts lead to the grave consideration that the purposes of God for each disciple are contingent upon his being led by the Spirit of God. Once James and John were rebuked for manifesting in undisciplined force that very element of character which, mortified through the Spirit, was to produce good fruit; they knew not as yet of what spirit they were (S. Luke ix. 54 f.).

(b) In another scene the same character is seen, still as yet only well-intentioned, but not brought under dominion to God (S. Matt. xx. 20 ff.). A right spiritual ambition was there; the Spirit of the Lord began to move them at times (Judges xiii. 25), but it found only partial expression; the brothers had not yet drunk of the cup and been baptized with the baptism.

(c) God's purposes require the discipline of character, not its annihilation. The son of thunder is to live as S. John, but his love is to be the electric force which can hate, and can blaze forth; the undisciplined ardour is to be brought into subjection to God, but it is not to lose the strength to speak boldly and to face death.

III.—*"Not every one that saith . . . but he that doeth the will."*

(a) The Gospel illustrates this reflection by the simile of the tree's life. The principle of life is within the tree, and though the life is one, each tree produces its fruit according to the nature which God has given it. There may be brothers, both sons of thunder, yet the manifestation, true to each, is not the same in both, while, however, both lives are the product of the one Spirit of life which is in them.

(b) The development of character under divine grace was the evidencing to their whole surrender (S. Matt. iv. 22). It is easy to say "Lord, Lord": it is another matter to have the ground about the roots of one's heart dug and dunged, while the fairest branches are pruned off that the fruit may be richer. But therein lies the will of the Master Husbandman, who knows for what he is cultivating his tree.

(c) To say "Lord, Lord," may be only impertinent approbation of him. Judas did in this way approve of Christ and was drawn to follow him, not perceiving that to do the will necessitated the divine possession of his character (see S. Matt. vii. 22, 23; x. 1, 8). His following was characterless, the failure to grasp how stern and severe is the requirement to *do* the will. When we contrast the sons of thunder with Judas we contrast virility of character with the empty piety reproved in the parable of the great supper (S. Luke xiv. 15-25 ff.).

God is Love

EIGHTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"God is love."—1 S. John iv. 8.

Picture: suppose you have been using light as a symbol to your mind of the universality and all-pervading character of the presence of God. Now take light as a picture of love.

Resolve: acts of love: acts of faith in God's love.

I.—*God in himself.*

- (a) His very essence is love. It is not merely that he loves: then he might cease to love. But his love does not spring from his will, as does creation: it is his nature to love. His love can never come into collision with any attribute which we ascribe to him, for there cannot be contradiction in the Being of God. As darkness is just the negation of light, so not-love is the annihilation of God.
- (b) Therefore God's love cannot end. We sometimes talk of exhausting God's patience, but there is no exhausting what is the very nature of God. Here is the hope of contrition, to come back into the sphere of God's love. Nor can his love be partial, as Calvinism implies. What can happen is that we can keep ourselves in opposition to God's love.
- (c) And to understand God we must love him, and those will most understand him, who understand love most. Who understands *us* best? It is he who loves us, and not the clever man, or the man of insight. And so too, mercifully, does God understand us through his love, and through his love provides for our needs in redemption and grace.

II.—*God in revelation.*

- (a) S. John in his epistle applies the love of God to revelation and dogma. There are many mysteries in God's revealed will: we shall get nearest to them through this central truth of God's love as his very Essence. The Incarnation, the Atonement, the Church, the Sacraments, the Holy Trinity are all thus revealed to us; and thus we through love, and therefore more often in meditation, shall know the truth even though it elude our intellect.
- (b) This thought interprets heaven to us: it is the full reception of divine love, unrestricted by our limitations of will or our failures. But more than this; heaven is not solely individual; it is the society in which the love of God is manifested in fulness; it is the fellowship of unimpeded love.
- (c) It explains hell to us. Christians can know the love of God in denial, in contradiction of their wills, in punishment, in pain and bereavement. But what of hell? is this God's love? And just herein lies its explanation: hell is what is altogether outside God's love: it is the deliberate and final rejection of God's love.

III.—*God in creation.*

- (a) Creation is the expression of God's will; and when he willed to create, that which he created was a revelation of himself, and so a work of love. It was his love which moved his will, that others might participate in his love.
- (b) The larger part of creation is the recipient of his love passively, and reciprocates it involuntarily by its fruitfulness, or beauty, or usefulness, and by testifying silently to his majesty. One great mystery of creation is its apparent cruelty in some aspects. Like the problem of the sorrows of human life, this is one of the perplexities to faith. The Christian holds to his conviction that when he shall be able to interpret the mystery he will see here too that God is love.
- (c) In the creation of intelligent beings, God created a nature capable of responding to his love voluntarily. Such are angels and men. We are created by the love of God and to love God, and the purpose of life is just the satisfaction of loving God.

Lessons from the Blessed Sacrament

EIGHTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Manna, which thy fathers knew not."—Deut. viii. 16.

Picture: the daily nourishment in the wilderness life.

Resolve: pray to learn the lessons of the Blessed Sacrament.

I.—*"Which thy fathers knew not."*

- (a) So once it could have been said of us in England. Alas! that now it cannot be so said; rather that we have heard and our fathers have told us what great things thou hast wrought among us. But would that we were either hot or cold! for we know, yet we do not know. We Christians do not pray enough for the faith of England to be fixed in the Blessed Sacrament.
- (b) Our fathers knew not, because this manna is neither material nor natural. They could not know save by revelation. Once they did know by revelation, and the Blessed Sacrament sustained their faith in the supernatural and in revelation. But now the growth of natural knowledge has lifted us up with pride, and we deny the supernatural.

II.—*"That he might humble thee"* (ver. 16).

- (a) By dependence on God. In the wilderness, when they hungered and were faint with thirst, they leaned upon God; but in the land with plenty we have learned to say "My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth" (ver. 17). We are not humble, but are self-sufficient. We no longer depend upon God, but only turn to him in fright, when human strength fails.
- (b) By its simplicity. If we were always conscious of going through the terrible wilderness, with fiery serpents and scorpions and drought, we might desire the manna. But we have no fear of spiritual dangers, and the manna is so common-place beside the striking of water out of the stony rock. And, moreover, we despise what we can always get (see ver. 15).

III.—*"That he might prove thee"* (ver. 16).

- (a) The Blessed Sacrament is an immense test. The children of Israel soon tired of the light food, and yearned for the flesh pots of Egypt. Their appetites were not yet educated. It is surprising how we can desire the pleasures of Egypt, quite confident that we shall not indulge in its sins. We need to persevere with the Blessed Sacrament, relying not on our perseverance but on its refining grace. Otherwise we shall not learn as Moses learned (Heb. xi. 25, 26).
- (b) Perseverance is the proving of the value which we ascribe to the Blessed Sacrament. We soon grow tired of that of which we think little; we soon grow careless in our reverence and devotion, when we think lightly of it. And thus we are tested. This is the explanation of England's conduct. And we who believe in this mystery of grace have to win back England to the faith by our perseverance.

IV.—*"To do thee good at thy latter end"* (ver. 16).

- (a) If the benefits of the Blessed Sacrament were immediately perceived we should not so easily grow tired of this food; but, then, the benefits would be very superficial. But this holy food slowly builds up the character and strengthens the will, and especially it is the medicine of immortality. Moreover, in our lack of faith we fail to perceive its immediate benefits, and ascribe them to ourselves, our good resolutions or our strength of will.
- (b) "And thou forget" (see ver. 14). How often do we see this in others, and despise them! In their prosperity they have forgotten those who helped them in the day of adversity, or they have become lifted up, and they forget that once they were very different. It seems terrible to think that we should ever fail to remember the Lord God, who giveth us power (ver. 17); but it is so. The heart is "lifted up"; our religion gets stale; Egypt is forgotten, and the benefits at the latter end are ascribed to ourselves.

The Will of God

EIGHTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost; O seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments."—Ps. cxix. 176, P.B.V.

Picture: the purpose of the Son of Man: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."—Heb. x. 7.

Pray: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

I.—*The will of God.*

- (a) One hundred and seventy-six verses in praise of the will of God. It is no wonder that our forefathers recited this psalm daily. Perhaps it is not wonderful that so few care to recite it to-day: it is thought to be waste of time by busy priests, and to be monotonous by light-minded religious. We have gone a great way from making the will of God the centre of our life and the foundation of our theology.
- (b) But here is an Israelite indeed. We often depreciate the religion of the days which followed Ezra, and think of it as concerned only with the mint and anise and cummin. This psalm will show us how the spirit fills out the letter: here is no rigid adherence to a mere code of external rules. It is the worship of one who glories in the law of God. Indeed it is the Spirit that quickeneth.
- (c) What is any interpretation of God's revelation if it be not fulfilled in the spirit! Some have wondered what men could find to inspire them in the rigid rule of Calvinism, and yet have had to acknowledge the saintly fire of Scottish life. And others have thought that Catholicism was merely external ceremonial, but have found that its truest exponents are the very salt of the earth. Both alike have worshipped the will of God.

II.—*The conclusion.*

- (a) The psalm teaches us who it is that will thus worship the will of God. The writer is one who has practised it, and who does not talk sentimentally about it. He does it, and does not merely submit to it when it is inevitable. So he loves it, and trusts it. He has put it to the proof, and has even suffered because of it.
- (b) And here is the conclusion, the experience of a life spent in following God's will. It has developed a rare character, that of one who says: "I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost," but who says it not as a raw penitent, but out of the deeper devotion of him who does not forget God's commandments.
- (c) The beautifully simple confession of one who has studied God's will in the practice of daily life; who has learnt therefrom his own weakness, and the character of God. "For I do not forget thy commandments." He has tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious; and hence this freedom of speech, this intimacy and confidence.

III.—*"O seek thy servant."*

- (a) The single-minded devotion to the will of God as the object of life's service, as the attachment which enlarges life, gives great honesty of speech with God. He who lives thus can confess his sins without exaggeration, and without the empty use of words.
- (b) Here is one who does not forget his commandments, and yet prays, "O seek thy servant." He is afraid of his own will still, its weakness and its selfishness. It is not enough for him to have given his will to God; God must hold it and keep it; he will fortify himself against the day of going astray.
- (c) He has learnt the sternness of God's will by the discipline of life, and through this has come to know its sweetness. He has stuck unto God's testimonies, and now he walks at liberty and knows that God's law abideth for ever in heaven. But he has learnt this in the school of adversity and perseverance. We know him only slightly, because we pretend that to love him is an easy thing. We must first reverence and obey him.

Leanness of Soul

EIGHTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"And he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul."—Ps. cvi. 15.

Picture: the children of Israel dying of the plague caused by the quails which had been given in answer to their request.

Pray: for spiritual strenuousness.

I.—*It is possible to pray to our own harm.*

- (a) Through sloth we may force the hand of God by praying to have our lot made easy. Have we never prayed earnestly, not ceasing at the third time (2 Cor. xii. 8), that some cross may be removed from our life, forgetful of the benefits of its discipline?
 - (b) So through self-indulgence we may pray to our own hurt. Some pray overmuch for sensible comforts as against spiritual dryness and desolation, estimating luxurious feelings above a fixed will. At times we pray for the removal of temptation rather than for grace to conquer a weak spot in our character.
 - (c) Self-will damages the prayers of many of God's servants. We may importune God with our own plans, desiring that his will should be done in our way rather than in his own way.
- In all such cases we are forgetting the reverence due to God in our prayers, and that our prayers should be "Not what I will, but what thou wilt."

II.—*By our lives we may urge God to give us our own way.*

- (a) By force of will some urge their own plans and opinions wilfully, forgetful of God, and how unlike are his ways to the pushing and manœuvring of the world. How few remember that more is wrought by prayer than by natural energy! Most people can get their own way if they strive for it: it does not follow that it is God's way, even although it be his work which we think we are forwarding.
- (b) By superficiality of character we may be making request of God, shrinking from the pain of deeper knowledge of self, estimating the service of God as a light matter, striving to escape from mortification of will and life, choosing always the lower of two courses because neither of them is sinful.
- (c) A spirit of worldliness. Spiritual things are found to be distasteful, and we desire the flesh pots of Egypt. We would enjoy ourselves to the uttermost, just avoiding sin. To indulge ourselves to the full will often be found possible with the avoidance of grave sin: we reckon not the leanness which enters into our souls, and that we are half-starved Christians.

III.—*The desire granted—with leanness of soul.*

- (a) The temptation, trial, difficulty, etc., is removed, but with this has gone all the spiritual fruits of discipline. The cross has been taken out of our life; we have avoided the opportunity of learning that "My grace is sufficient for thee." We "become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat" (Heb. v. 12).
- (b) We get our own way, or are successful in our policy: but the blessing of God is not upon it. We have attracted or persuaded another by influences which were natural and not divine: there has been no real conversion to the will of God, and so the effects are not permanent, while we too have deteriorated; the pride of success has eaten into our hearts: we are rich and have need of nothing (see Apoc. iii. 17, 18).
- (c) We have shrunk from mortification, and from hardness and endurance, and the leanness has entered into our soul; we no longer have the spiritual ambitions which once urged us forward until we shrank back; the higher vocations have slipped off from us, and we are contented to be as we are.

The Stewardship of Life

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"The Lord commended," etc.—S. Luke xvi. 8.

Picture: the scenes of the parable.

Resolve: to do all things to the glory of God.

I.—*The parable of the unjust steward.*

- (a) The lesson of the parable is the more prominent just because the character of the steward is open otherwise to censure. That he should be commended at all is what arrests attention. "His lord," who was the sufferer both from his steward's wastefulness and his questionable policy at the last, was constrained to commend him "because he had done wisely."
- (b) Throughout the parable there is the implied contrast between temporal riches and yet higher possessions. The former are disparagingly spoken of as "Mammon of unrighteousness," either by contrast (see ver. 11), or as providing so commonly the temptation to wrong. So "The unrighteous steward" might be described rather as "The steward of unrighteousness" (ver. 8, R.V. marg), that is the steward of unrighteous mammon.
- (c) Here then is the antithesis: a steward of merely temporal goods shows great wisdom, whatever faults he may have. A steward of the true riches frequently shows less wisdom in the exercise of these higher responsibilities: but to be wiser in the former than the latter is a proof of inappreciation: he holds to the one and despises the other.

II.—*Life is a stewardship.*

- (a) As the steward is trusted with his master's goods, so the Christian steward with his Master's goods, such as natural endowments, and dispositions. God is insulted when a man applies his brains to understand business and get on, but treats his religion as beneath serious consideration; when he strives to please his earthly master that he may be promoted, and cares not to please God.
- (b) "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." The lesson of the parable is however not so much the contrast of masters as the contrast between the alertness of the man of the world and the supineness of the Christian. Our divine service demands of a man the fullest application of his natural gifts; not merely industry, still less mere good intention, but sound judgment, wisdom, ability, energy, discretion are demanded of us. It is not enough to mean well, we must act wisely. It is a terrible saying that "A large part of the business of the wise is to counteract the efforts of the good."
- (c) The parable can never grow out of date, and its lesson is habitually escaping us. We think of piety when we think of religion, as though this were all. This we should take for granted as of course required, but it is not sufficient; we are responsible for the harm done by indiscretion, narrowness of mind, lack of judgment, and a thousand other failures in wisdom which cause men to misunderstand or despise the religion of Jesus Christ. A high standard is demanded, and that not only in good conduct.

III.—*Some suggestions from the parable.*

- (a) A right use of natural endowments (ver. 9, R.V.). Taken literally the words mean that we are to use money as part of our stewardship, so spending it as to be storing up in heaven friends who, when we die, will welcome us into the eternal home. There is no need to deny the literal application, but it is to be carried further. What should we think of the manager of a business who alienated his master's customers through his fads, or by his curtness! Is he not expected to make customers by his influence and persuasiveness?
- (b) "He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much" (ver. 10). We may feel that to be unfaithful or unrighteous in natural gifts does not mean unfaithfulness in spiritual ones. The very contrast which we make is the unfaithfulness; we are trying to take God out of this world and relegate him to the other.
- (c) Ver. 12. Since life is a stewardship, the gifts entrusted to us are not our own. We must give account of them. The reward of a faithful stewardship is a partnership. Incapacity in administering the goods of another shows either a wrong principle or an inability to be trusted with responsibility. A serious view of life: I must account to God for the whole of it, that I have made the best of each part.

Pride and Independence

NINTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*These things were our examples.*"—1 Cor. x. 6.

Picture: the Corinthian Church as our example in this epistle.

Resolve: to consider the danger of pride and independence.

I.—*The Corinthians and the Old Testament.*

- (a) S. Paul enforces his practical teaching by appeal to the history of God's dealings as recorded in the Old Testament. Great value in this, if its importance be rightly understood. If the divine treatment of the Jews, or of Old Testament characters, be regarded as exceptional in principle, then they have no value to us as examples; but if they be regarded as illustrations of God's unchangeable will, they become records of the profoundest value.
- (b) The pre-eminent value of Old Testament history does not lie in the accuracy of its details or in the impartiality of the historians, but in the fact that in it we read history as presented from the divine standpoint; not history and hero-worship, nor history of the natural development of nations, nor history of the growth of political or social ideas, but history from the side of God's eternal laws.
- (c) Important to realize that the Bible is illustrating to us how we are to regard all history, national or individual, and is not separating from the common experience an isolated portion of history as Biblical. The Corinthians might have regarded these examples of S. Paul as Bible narratives, and therefore not as parallel to their own case; at any rate *we* often reason thus within ourselves. But those same Corinthians have got into the Bible and become our examples. So we too are part of God's great Bible which is always being written in the history of all the ages.

II.—*The common life and the Bible life.*

- (a) The wilderness life of the Hebrews was S. Paul's example to the Corinthians. It was a common enough life to those old Hebrews, who had no thought that they were providing material for a Bible for their descendants. How profitable if we were to read the Bible with more desire to find in it the illumined interpretation of common life.
- (b) The Corinthians had their apostle, their two epistles, and the first gifts of the Holy Spirit. It seems to remove them from us into the sphere of the Bible kind of life; yet they did not think so much of any of these privileges. Nor have we thought that the Greeks of that age were so unlike us when we have read of them in secular history.
- (c) In the day when the Master bids us give an account of our stewardship, we shall see our life in the light of God's great Bible of privilege and responsibility. When we are faced with the uniqueness of our spiritual benefits shall we not wonder, as we do now of the Hebrews and Corinthians, that we could have regarded our lives as secular or commonplace?

III.—*The Corinthian example.*

- (a) We English are not unlike the Corinthians; we have the same tone of self-satisfied commercial materialism with the affectation of intellectualism and culture. We play with serious affairs and enjoy novelties on which to exercise our superficiality. We are inclined to despise the greater gifts of the Spirit by comparison with the more transient evidences of his presence, and we prefer display to solid reality.
- (b) We, too, are impatient of control and cannot bear to be spoken to. Authority and warning are to us the infringement of liberty; we, too, think that we can be trusted to do anything, and need not be careful for ourselves; we are indignant if any one commend to us the prudence of practising self-discipline.
- (c) The Corinthian defects are manifested in their tendency to despise the sacraments. To them alone did S. Paul write at any length about the Eucharist (x. 14 ff.; xi. 17 ff.). It was at once too simple for their pride and too deep for their superficiality. *These things were our examples.*

Patriarchal Faith

NINTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*These all died in faith.*"—Heb. xi. 13.

Picture: the contrast between the patriarchal revelation and your own; and marvel at the divine power which sustained the Jewish fathers in their life of obedience to the divine guidance.

Pray: Lord, increase our faith.

I.—*The patriarchal faith of obedience.*

- (a) Faith of self-surrender (ver. 8). Consider Abraham in answer to a divine call, surrendering his home, country and religious associations, to go forth not knowing whither God would lead him. We no more know how the call came to him than we generally know how it comes to others in our own days: but in the readiness to surrender God's voice is heard. The start.
- (b) Faith of patience (vers. 9, 10). Abraham sojourned, looking for. Faith gained for him the grace of obedience, and in the wider outlook he learned to receive the gift of God. Each, if he is to obey the call of God, must sojourn in the age in which God has placed him, not as a man of his age, but as one who looks for the city of God. Faith is the gift which illuminates the understanding. The wider outlook.
- (c) Faith of influence (ver. 11). Even Sarah, past age, and at one time laughing at the promise, is brought through the influence of Abraham to share his faith, and so inherit with him the promises. The self-discipline of Abraham's faith disciplined Sarah's, and through his influence upon her he entered into his promise. Discipline.

II.—*Characteristics of patriarchal faith.*

- (a) They saw the promises (ver. 13). "Show thy servants thy work, and their children thy glory" (Ps. xc. 16, P.B.V.) is the life of faith. "Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions" (Joel ii. 28; Acts ii. 17). To see the dawning glory of God is the secret of the high life.
- (b) They welcomed the vision with joy (ver. 13). The spies saw the promised land and were discouraged: Moses saw the land and was not allowed to enter, but "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." He rose to the height of his vision; spiritual sight responded to by spiritual effort.
- (c) They confessed the true end of God's dealings (vers. 13 ff.). The life of faith stretches forward and loosens its hold upon the present. Strangers and pilgrims, embracing the promises of the city which God has prepared, the sons of faith confess that they are not of this world. They must desire the better and seek it, lest, being mindful of the world whence they are come out, they find too easily an opportunity to return.

III.—*The patriarchal faith of sacrifice.*

- (a) Abraham was to receive his promise through Isaac, and first he must be sacrificed (ver. 19). Only through whole surrender to God does his gift become the source of our blessing. Nothing is given us to rest in, not even our spiritual gifts. Our communions are not for our enjoyment but for his service. Our dearest Christian friend must not come between us and God.
- (b) The sacrifice of natural judgment (vers. 20, 21). Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, each bless the younger son against all patriarchal custom. It is the supremacy of the divine will; it is the sanctification of the natural judgment as it submits itself to the direction of God. In smaller daily matters it is the estimate of character above ability, humility above strength, which sees victory through failure, and is sure of God's blessing where there is sacrifice.
- (c) The world abandoned (ver. 22). Not the patriarchal home on the other side of the flood, not the pasturages of Abraham and Isaac, not the favoured court of Pharaoh. Pilgrims and strangers, even in death Joseph found no abiding place for his bones. The world was not abandoned by an original self-surrender (I. a), nor by the pilgrim's life (II. c); at the last the faith which sees the city of God has to conquer in the struggle to resign life.

Force of Character and Indecision

NINTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"He that is not against us is for us."—S. Luke ix. 50. "He that is not with me is against me."—S. Luke xi. 23.

Picture: the great judgment which interprets the secrets of the heart: there will be no indecision then.

Pray: for force of character.

I.—*The law of the excluded middle.*

- (a) A serious thought: one must be for or against. A difficult thought: when is not to be against the same as being for? When is not to be for the same as being against? In the highest region of life, upon which the whole of one's life turns, how can I tolerate indecision? Life cannot be spent in a *try*, or a *should like*, least of all if it is to be life of force and purpose. "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation" (S. Luke xi. 17).
- (b) The claim which Jesus Christ makes is supreme and absolute. To brook a rival is blasphemy. He who demands the subjection of obedience cannot endure the tolerance of good intentions. Nor can he be patronized, nor taken up as one takes up politics or art: he must rule, he must take up the whole being and govern it by his Spirit, in his grace.
- (c) The great rival to Jesus Christ is self, next to that the world. Indecision wishes to get the benefit of them all. But "if any man come to me and hate not . . . his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (S. Luke xiv. 26).

II.—*The law of severity and charity.*

- (a) The two superficially contradictory utterances point to a principle in life: by the one I judge myself, by the other I curb my judgment of others. How often do we reverse the process!
- (b) Examine the contexts: in the former a spirit of self-complacency and jealousy was rebuked: "He followeth not with us." In the latter he was dealing with a critical disposition, which lightly esteemed him, saw no beauty in him to desire, but accused him. In the one case the disciples were blinded by prejudice against seeing the truth, in the other case the Pharisees were doing just the same: in both cases the Truth saw into the heart of the matter.
- (c) The one was doing good; he was casting out devils in the name of Christ. The Pharisees found fault with Christ for doing good, when "he was casting out a devil and it was dumb" (S. Luke xi. 14). So in the former case he could not be against him. Many applications of this truth are very difficult to learn. In the latter case goodness and mercy were not valued, but hatred of Jesus had dried up the heart. When shall we learn to judge by the mind of Christ, and not by the limitations of our own?

III.—*The law of success and failure.*

- (a) It has been thought that the true solution of these two sayings lies in the fact that the former was said when Jesus Christ had not many followers, the latter when he was in the most popular period of his ministry. This criticism will seem to some to savour of scepticism; it may be without sufficient basis; it is better to rebut a criticism than to condemn it. In this case the criticism seems to neglect the contexts, but contains a truth which we do well to consider.
- (b) When truth is unpopular, not to be against it will often be to be for it. Most men will go with the stream, and but few will be heroes. In society which is evil, one must not hurl the severe texts of the gospels against those who in silence withstand the evil, but who have not strength to oppose it actively. In the mental histories of some lives there has been so much against Christ, that to be nevertheless not against him is to be for him.
- (c) But there is a heavy demand when life is easy: it is so easy to be a Christian when everybody around is one, and when one is expected to be such. In a vicarage or a theological college it means nothing just to pass muster. This is part of the "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you!" "To whom much is given, of him shall much be required."

Preparation for Holy Communion

NINTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"But withal prepare me also a lodging; for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you."—Philem. 22.

Picture: the preparation of Philemon to receive S. Paul with all honour as his guest.

Examine your preparation for communion.

I.—*Consider what Philemon owed to S. Paul.*

- (a) His own life (19). Never be unmindful of spiritual benefactors, especially at the altar. If Philemon owed his conversion to S. Paul it was "under God." He who invites us to prepare for him a lodging is verily he to whom directly we owe our own self. S. Paul was right in thinking that the consideration would affect Philemon's treatment of Onesimus (10). Is he to whom we owe our lives not right in thinking this will affect our relation of love and charity towards our neighbours?
- (b) The restoration of Onesimus, no longer a slave, but as a brother. In old days he had been unprofitable; perhaps Philemon had been better off without him. But now he is to be more than restored, as a brother beloved. Give God the due acknowledgment of Christian fellowship, this realization of the one Bread. Thank God for many creatures once unprofitable, now profitable to us and to him (11). What Onesimus had stolen, S. Paul would repay. In the Blessed Sacrament we are more than repaid for whatever we have suffered.
- (c) These marks of favour and confidence. The apostle trusted Philemon with the restoration of Onesimus, who had wronged him, and he favoured him by the promise of a visit. He knew the pleasure it would be to him: it was at least an equal pleasure to S. Paul. Thus does our blessed Lord treat us.

II.—*"Withal."*

- (a) He knew that Philemon was praying for his release. Our blessed Lord lies imprisoned in the Blessed Sacrament. It is only his hired house (Acts xxviii. 30) until in answer to our prayers he finds his lodging in the hearts of the faithful. He knows with what eagerness his people are praying for the honour to receive him.
- (b) The honour is bestowed upon Philemon because of his obedience (21). S. Paul has confidence that he will receive his runaway slave generously, even as he would receive the apostle himself (17). "Inasmuch as ye have done it," etc. It must have been a humbling joy to Philemon to read, "If thou count me therefore a partner": but what shall *we* say to such words from Jesus Christ?
- (c) There was a liberality about Philemon which gave peculiar joy to S. Paul: the bowels of the saints were refreshed by him (7): he would do more than S. Paul asked of him (21). A liberal spirit is bountifully rewarded in the eucharistic visits.

III.—*"Prepare me a lodging."*

- (a) The preparation would be made with great joy, to welcome so dear and honoured a guest. What remembrances were conjured up of former communion between them! what anticipations of the renewed visit! Nothing would be neglected which would give the apostle pleasure. What care, what anxiety that all should be as he would wish!
- (b) What feelings too of Christian pride in receiving so great a guest! How could Philemon honour him enough! How much he would make of him when he came! how the visit would be treasured up afterwards, often recalled to mind! The whole Church of Colosse would share in it too, and would look upon Philemon as the one who had received this visit.
- (c) And Philemon was to receive him from prison, after suffering for the name of Christ. Our blessed Lord comes to us in his Eucharist in such form: set at liberty—given to us in the power of his ascension, but having suffered even unto death on our behalf.

The Church and Judaism

NINTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ."—Gal. iii. 14.

Picture: the vision of the woman in the Apocalypse, who is first the Jewish Church and then the Christian Church.

Resolve: great patience through faith in God.

I.—*The Church the inheritor of Judaism.*

- (a) What a wonderful history Judaism is! The election of a nation to be God's own people, with a purpose to be unfolded in their history. From one aspect this purpose has been fulfilled in Jesus, who was preached to be the Messiah. Sometimes we stop with that, as though beyond that Judaism ceased to be instructive.
- (b) But S. Paul again and again considers the Church as the true unfolding of Judaism. We—the Church, including Gentiles—are the true sons of Abraham; Judaism is shrinking into the material sonship of Ishmael (Gal. iv. 22 ff.). We are the adoption (Eph. i. 5, cp. Rom. ix. 4); we are God's own people, with the lot of our inheritance (Col. i. 12), brought by redemption into the covenant and commonwealth of Israel (Eph. i. 14; ii. 12 ff.).
- (c) Many a deep lesson of faith in God is to be learnt by dwelling upon the mixed fortunes of Israel and the fulfilment of the divine purposes in spite of failure and loss on her part. We may learn therefrom to think less despairingly of the Church on earth which so closely follows her history.

II.—*Judaism and the wider influence.*

- (a) Often depressed when we look out upon the Church and see its worldliness, its scattered and divided forces, that it counts for so little in the estimation of the world. And hence some seek a little haven for themselves, and care nothing more for the wider purposes of God. And if we do not do this, yet we become powerless through a sense of weakness.
- (b) But it was to the Jews that the promises were given, and not to any sect of Judaism. It was not particularly the enthusiastic zealots or the devout and correct pharisees who received Christ; it was rather the humble, who were content to find their spiritual home in the Judaism which was provided by God for them, not finding it insufficient to lead them to him.
- (c) S. Paul, indeed, was a pharisee; one of the apostles was a zealot: Zacharias and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna, were of no section. But it was Judaism of the dispersion, influenced by hellenistic thought, which had kept its mind open and was progressive, that became the chief instrument in launching Christianity upon the world. And yet some to-day would shut off the Church from all influences which are outside.

III.—*The Church repeats Judaism.*

- (a) Surely God has meant us to learn patience from the chequered history of Judaism. Here the picture is reproduced; we see in the Church parties and cleavages, hellenistic Christianity, and Hebraic Christianity. We, too, have our exiles and our depressing periods; we, too, differ theologically as pharisee and sadducee; we, too, have our worldly aspect and our devout aspect. Cannot the Almighty be doing with his Church what he did with Judaism? Is he not great enough to be undisturbed by many flaws which look big to us?
- (b) Learn from Judaism to see the larger purposes of God. One can picture a pious Jew lamenting the innovation of the synagogue, which their fathers did not have. We know how the more devout resisted the culture of Greek society, and we know, too, that it did, as a matter of fact, carry many off their feet. But it was the synagogue and hellenized Judaism through which God was working out his purpose.
- (c) May he not likewise have purposes for his Church in its varied experiences, many of which seem to us not opportunities but losses, because our faith is so delicate that it cannot bear exposure? We get frightened at the world's progress of thought, which is very much what it is, because we are not ready to consecrate it to God and to guide it.

God and National Life

NINTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"But yet the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier."—Ps. xciii. 5, P.B.V.

Picture: the sea in a storm.

Pray: to see God in national life.

I.—*The sea and the Lord above.*

- (a) How wild it looks, as though it obeyed no law! Yet we know better, and are so sure that it is under law that we almost make the law into our god. To the psalmist the mad storm was anything but an illustration of the natural reign of law; it required a great conviction to enable him to pen this illustration.
- (b) Over this unruly tempest sits one who is mightier: he does not say that the sea is obeying him: he regards it rather as the rising up against him of the rebel powers of the world. Another psalmist sees in the storm which sweeps over the whole land the direct work of God, who sitteth upon the flood which pours down its torrents (Ps. xxix.).
- (c) Here is the world of human strife, diversity and complexity of conflict. Enveloped in it we do not find it easy to be assured that God is above it, mightier, and even in the ultimate interpretation causing it. He holds the waters of the seas in the hollow of his hands. He measures the sea and determines its boundaries. Such is man's highest view of life.

II.—*Consider the stormy sea of life.*

- (a) It is no child's play, and it works its mischief and damage. And yet out of the storm comes life and health. The winds keep the world in health, refresh it and renew it. If we could organize human life by a perpetual system of fine weather, sunshine, and mild climate, we should unbalance human society just as surely as if we could apply the same process to nature.
- (b) Apply to the periodical recurrence of economic struggle and labour strife, and learn to trust in God. It is not only in the still small voice that he is heard; sometimes he speaks loudly, and the storm bursts in thunderclaps, and the cedars of Libanus are broken.
- (c) Think not that because there is storm Almighty God is not in it. He is readjusting, reforming, renewing. After the storm the air is cleared, and we can see the good which it has done. But there is a close connection between the storm which precedes, and the freshness which follows.

III.—*Reflections.*

- (a) We learn to see God's hand in the private adversities of life, the bereavements and misfortunes, and though with difficulty we can say of them, "My time is in thy hand." So learn to look out upon the storms and tempests of national, social, political, and economic life. Do not think that Almighty God can only concern himself with the individual.
- (b) Learn therefore to have faith and patience: to trust him while obeying his laws, to follow his will in justice, and to look out for the revelation of his will in the affairs of history. Believe that he is in the storm and in the earthquake, and you will learn to look for him in them. Almighty God is not always in what is peaceful, nor necessarily absent from what is restless and disturbing.
- (c) Turn more to him as the Ruler of the nations, as the Guardian of national right. Do not confine his part in history to the history which is past. God lives; and it is a living faith in him which alone can guide the confused affairs of the present. Nor think that he wills you to live outside your generation, apart from your country, indifferent to your surroundings.

Christian Patriotism

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"He beheld the city and wept over it."—S. Luke xix. 41.

Picture: the scene.

Resolve: to hold a wide conception of Christian obligation.

I.—*The patriotism of Jesus Christ.*

- (a) Not confined to this Sunday's gospel: involved in his being born a Jew (S. John i. 11), manifested in such apparent narrowness as "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," or such devotion as "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," etc. (S. Matt. xxiii. 37); or the bitter irony of "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (S. Luke xiii. 33).
- (b) Jesus Christ is here as elsewhere interpreting to us the mind of God in the language of human life. The gospels reveal to us the closest view of what God really is in relation to us. The temptation is to confine this truth to the softer revelations of character: but mark, for example, the concentrated scorn of "Go, tell that fox." And here, the revelation of patriotism makes known to us an element of character required of us, and corresponding to a truth in the divine nature.
- (c) The strength of patriotism. No weakly, sentimental thing: it takes a man to be a patriot. Any miserable parody of a man can weep over his little losses or offence to dignity; it takes a great heart to weep over the decay of a nation. And he, who now wept over Jerusalem, was able to die for it (see S. John xi. 50), die for the truth of it rather than please it by a sacrifice of truth. This is patriotism.

II.—*A great Christian responsibility.*

- (a) No man who takes Jesus Christ as his model can despise patriotism. Consider what demands it makes of response to mighty influences, and of rising to the height of responsibility. Christianity, as he taught it, is no selfish individualism, nor a narrow interpretation of religion which can think only of one's own soul.
- (b) There is no room in Christian patriotism for jingoism, which despises and belittles other nations: to him the Jewish nation was to be a source of blessing to the world. Nor is there place for false patriotism, which can tolerate wrong because it is national. It was Jesus who at length uttered the condemnation of Jerusalem: "Thy house is left unto thee desolate." Nor yet is there room for the superior person, who boasts of cosmopolitanism, and who in isolation of pride conceives himself not to require the influence of national character and history. For the whole time of his ministry Jesus gave himself to his own nation.
- (c) Patriotism must be practically applied if it is not to evaporate into a sentiment. It is a demand which God makes on us: let it be applied in the family, the parish, the municipal area, etc.: to social problems, education, political responsibility, national character. Apply likewise to the Church; we must be Church patriots also.

III.—*A divine revelation here.*

- (a) We are bidden see God's care for nations and cities. "Except the Lord build the house"; it makes all the difference to a nation whether God's eye rests on it day and night, or whether he has left it to itself. God is supremely concerned about our nation, and we too must be. Woe to that nation which cares not for divine protection and guidance, and casts him off. God will cast it off. "Your house is left to you."
- (b) A nation has a divine purpose to fulfil, over which God watches. We may or may not perceive something of this national purpose, but we know that "righteousness exalteth a nation," and that under divine protection it will be fulfilling his purposes. To separate patriotism from religion is to take the care of a nation out of God's hands into men's.
- (c) The importance of national character. Character is built up by God whether individual or national, and every nation has a character, or is sinking to ruin from lack of it. It was its decay over which Jesus Christ, interpreting God's mind in the language of human sensation, wept.

The Gravity of Probation

TENTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"If thou hadst known."—S. Luke xix. 42.

Picture: the regrets of the lost opportunity of a lifetime.

Resolve: to consider the gravity of life's probation.

I.—*The opportunities of life.*

- (a) Life is more than a passing through so many years of probation with an individual salvation secured at the end. It is a divine purpose, and for the fulfilment of it divine providence prepares the appropriate opportunities.
- (b) But opportunities may be lost by the individual as well as by the nation. They come in unexpected and unlikely forms, and even the purpose of life is not clear while as yet we are in the midst of it. And it is not difficult to perceive at least some reasons why purpose and opportunity may be beneficially obscure: were they otherwise the courage of some would fail, the pride of independence and self-importance would ruin many.
- (c) The purpose of life is unfolded by continuous seizure of the opportunity. But how to seize? Spiritual conditions must be fulfilled in the spiritual world; and two such help us towards the solution of this question. First, if my spiritual state be not right, no opportunity can be of any avail to me; secondly, if my spiritual state be as God would have it for his purpose, we believe in the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. But there are many who would greatly like to serve God, who do not understand that they cannot do so unless they live closely to him.

II.—*The day of visitation.*

- (a) The word "visitation" is suggestive: it is "episcopé" (Greek). Almighty God is the divine Episcopus, Bishop, Overseer. He indeed always sees, but at times he makes a special visitation. In the O.T. these visitations are presented as of mercy (Gen. i. 25) or judgment (Jer. v. 9). In the Gospel we see that the Incarnation was a visitation to Jerusalem in mercy, but if not recognized it must assume another complexion.
- (b) The visitation of God is his day of action. When it is said, "To-day, if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts," the psalmist is contemplating a visitation, and fears lest Israel, as in the days of the wilderness, shall misinterpret it. In 1 Pet. ii. 12 the word occurs for a second time in the N.T., where its most simple interpretation is perhaps the sifting of persecution. Cf. Wisd. iii. 7-9; iv. 15.
- (c) Almighty God sees, but in the opportunities of life he makes a visitation. It is a grave aspect of a visitation that it is not merely an opportunity but also a crisis of examination. When he visits he expects to find us ready to seize the occasion, *i.e.* he knows that we should be ready. If we know not the time of our visitation, the opportunity becomes a judgment.

III.—*"But now they are hid from thine eyes."*

- (a) The words help in some measure to explain the mysteries of Holy Week. Jerusalem had been unready for its visitation of opportunity, and now its day had passed. All that followed was the natural sequence of national blindness. One more visitation was granted in the apostolic preaching in Jerusalem, and then came the fall of the city.
- (b) We regard life as a great opportunity kept before us to the last. This presents one side of the appreciation of God's inexhaustible mercy: but the words before us propose a grave qualification. Visitations not recognized mark the gradual stages of decay, and there is a limit beyond which they cease, because the divine Episcopus no longer expects. This stage is normally to be marked by the complacency of indifference.
- (c) Less finally fatal, but yet grievous, are the things which are hid from our eyes because by unfaithfulness in response to grace we are prevented from securing some visitation in its fulness. Life is lived henceforth on a lower level; we walk content with the second or third best; various ranges of grace have eluded our grasp.

Zeal for God's Honour

TENTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves."
—S. Luke xix. 46.

Picture: the cleansing of the temple.

Pray: for zeal in God's honour.

I.—*The house of prayer.*

- (a) The Jews trafficked in the court of the Gentiles; in any part which they regarded as sacred such traffic would have scandalized them. Our Lord quotes Isaiah's "house of prayer for all nations" (cf. S. Mark xi. 17), and the Jews understood that he was rebuking their contempt of the Gentiles (Isa. lvi. 7). Yet they could not protest, for their conduct was not to be justified; at the best it was a disorderly practice which could not be defended.
- (b) Isaiah's words are part of the ideal of restored Israel; the gathering together of the dispersed exilists opens the prophet's mind to the yet larger dispersion (Isa. lvi. 3-9). He declares that the foreigner and even the eunuch, if they are loyal-hearted servants of Jehovah, shall find joy in the temple.
- (c) What he condemned did not shock the average religion of the Jews: we may say that no irreverence was intended. The deep irreverence did not lie in the mere distraction and unseemliness, but in their irreverence of mind towards the Gentiles. There must be in our days, acts which are commonly done by religiously minded people, but which are similarly irreverent, being based on false principles, the truth of which we are too blind to see.

II.—*A den of thieves.*

- (a) Here some words of Jeremiah force home the lesson. The Jews regarded the temple in a spirit of complacency, while yet their conduct showed no true appreciation of Jehovah's religion. In his eyes the temple had become like a den of robbers, and the words conveyed a threat of destruction (Jer. vii. 4; 9 ff.).
- (b) The contrast between the two prophets is great. The one opens the vision of expansion and greater blessing. It is this with which Jesus associated himself, and it was the way of greater glory to the Jews. But Jeremiah's words pointed to exile and destruction; it was that way which Jesus accused the Jews of favouring. And it was not the first time that his teaching had conveyed such lessons.
- (c) He illustrates here two sides of his teaching; his advocacy of the Gentiles, and his judgments on the Jews. They are two sides of one problem. According to the prophets the reception of the Gentiles was to complete the glory of the Jewish restoration. And now the Jews were not ready for this expansion; so they would lose the privilege which should have been theirs. What do we lose by narrowness of spiritual vision?

III.—*Application.*

- (a) A den of robbers does not suggest robbery but the wild irregular life which such men live in their own dens. He said that they had made the temple such a place. How far have the Christians made God's House—the Church—a den of robbers, by secularizing it, and by insulting in his name those to whom he brings a revelation of life!
- (b) Apply individually also. The inner life of each Christian is to be God's house by virtue of baptism. A place, therefore, of prayer, of speech with God. But what of the tongue which blesses God and curses men! or of the heart given once to him and now wrapped up in self! See Jeremiah's charge; lying words, walking after other gods, and then coming to stand before Jehovah.
- (c) Once it was observed that the zeal of God's house had consumed him. At this second cleansing too we note his burning indignation at the dishonour to his Father. How far does that strike a correspondence in our lives? And we must seek to share in our Lord's mind toward his Church.

To possess One's Possessions

TENTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and he house of Jacob shall possess their possessions."—Obad. 17.

Picture: the remnant of Judah during the exile, weak and depressed in its own land.

Resolve: some act of self-conquest.

I.—*Jacob cannot enjoy its possessions.*

- (a) Because weak and demoralized. It was finding its own promised land destitute and destroyed: separated from its brethren, it was not able to hold its possessions. It stood alone and weak, surrounded by enemies. Seemingly it was deserted by God. How many Christians have similarly felt themselves alone and weak in their own land!
- (b) Because not knowing what to enjoy. Zion's temple had never been properly appreciated, or Jacob would have learned how to hold fellowship with his God even when the temple was in ruins. The promised land had been appropriated only as conveying material advantages, which had been misused.
- (c) Because harassed by enemies. There were the surrounding and inimical clans encroaching on the borders, and especially the half-brother Edom. Further off there was the suzerain power which was holding Jacob's brethren in subjection. It is difficult to decide which of the two had the more pitiable lot.

II.—*The conditions to be fulfilled.*

- (a) Edom must be withdrawn from its encroachments, that half-brother, the old self which always opposes, and to which we are so tolerant and fraternal, although we hate it. And there are the other clans hampering the borders, restricting closely our spiritual possessions. There are encroachments of time and occupation, fear of public opinion, worldly estimate, and many more such things, which leave at last very little more than our prayers on Sunday as the Christian possession.
- (b) Zion must be sanctified, the holy citadel within consecrated to God, purpose and intention fixed and purged by the same power which expels Edom and the other clans. This interior cleansing is to be the first stage of claiming the whole possession of life as God's.
- (c) This deliverance must be the work of God's grace. Through it we are to learn what and how to enjoy. And this will lead the way to the struggle together with our brethren against the foreign power. We may possess our possessions, however, to a large extent while still Assyria or Persia claims an over-lordship. If the Church is cleansed and united it will not fear the world.

III.—*"Shall possess their possessions."*

- (a) Jacob was in his possessions; he never possessed them. So, too, the Christian is in the kingdom of heaven; but is he going to begin to possess it? Possession implies usage, reaping the benefit of, enjoying. For this, Jacob must be God's Israel, the prince who prevails with God.
- (b) The delivery and purging may be painful: they call forth effort and strain. It is afterwards that it yieldeth the peaceable fruit. The joy is not in the sacrifice, else where were the sacrifice? The joy is afterwards. Jacob will enjoy the fruits of the struggle when it has borne the burden of the expulsion of his enemies from the borders.
- (c) The possession of possessions is in the life of sonship, not in being sons and living like aliens. It is found in the expansion of the filial nature, its freedom, privilege, response to the Father, the experience of power at one's disposal, appreciation of the heart of God, life of communion with him.

Vocation

TENTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."—S. John xv. 16.

Consider: the call of one of the apostles.

Resolve: to consider anew one's Confirmation, or Ordination, or Profession, in the light of this meditation.

I.—*The truth of vocation guards the divine Omnipotence.*

- (a) Almighty God might conceivably accomplish his purposes without man's co-operation, solely through the direct agency of the Holy Spirit. It would certainly very considerably affect one's conception of the divine system, and, as it seems to us, would not enhance his glory, while it would minimize the glory of human nature.
- (b) He chooses to accomplish his will through man, whom thereby he raises into deliberate co-operation with himself. As of old he chose Abraham, and Moses, and the prophets, so in the Christian dispensation he has chosen apostles, and priests, and leaders of men. In so doing, he has knit man together in the mutual service of the Church.
- (c) He not only chooses to work through man, but further, he chooses his own agents: he is not dependent on the offer of service. There may be self-will, ambition, and pride mixed with the higher motives of one's offer, whereby it is easy to confound God's will with one's own. As God works through man, so normally he manifests his choice of workers through men whom he has appointed. It is spiritually higher to be guided in such matters by others than to insist upon one's own judgment.

II.—*It teaches the true end of man's being.*

- (a) To each his own vocation, one in one way, and one in another. Man's true aim in life is to fulfil that for which he is purposed by God. One's first and most definite vocation is to be a Christian; few grasp even that. The form in which that primary vocation is to be followed is generally determined by Almighty God through natural circumstances. To be a butcher is not a divine vocation, but for a butcher to be a Christian is a very definite vocation.
- (b) To realize and to follow vocation demands the surrender of the will to God. Irrational life fulfils its vocation necessarily; rational life can only fulfil it voluntarily. It is not that most Christians have not got vocations, but that they do not perceive vocations.
- (c) How great is the privilege and the responsibility that God should choose one for anything! It raises human life to a place in the eternal purposes of God, and ennobles it. Instead of despising life as secular, because, *e.g.*, one is not a priest, one finds the road to saintship as well with the scullery-maid as with the missionary.

III.—*The moral value of vocation.*

- (a) It removes the impertinence or diffidence of special vocations. Who would dare to be a priest or a religious if such a life were dependent upon the attainment of spiritual superiority? To some, indeed, he speaks so unmistakably by various ways that they cannot doubt to what he is calling them, but they will the more marvel that he should have called them rather than others.
- (b) A high sense of vocation teaches great humility: not my fitness, but his will. I am not worthy even to have been called to be a Christian, as the knowledge of my own life amply assures me. It is very humbling to realize all this in the light of God's choice, knowing that he has taken me up into his purposes to co-operate with himself.
- (c) It teaches that God's pledge overshadows vocation. He who volunteers may well fear his capacity; but he who obeys God's voice cannot doubt his power, or its readiness to meet their necessities. S. Paul expressed his experience of vocation when he said that "When I am weak then am I strong."

The Fellowship of Love

TENTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"God is love."—1 S. John iv. 8, 16.

Picture: the mutual love of the Father and the Son expressed in the words "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," and "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do."

Resolve: to remind myself frequently of the love of God to me in Christ.

I.—*The basis of fellowship.*

- (a) God is love. Creation is an exercise of God's love: each one of us is an object of his love, and we are bound together by that relationship. God loves me: but God loves us; and his love of me is inseparable from his love of us. We are one family in God.
- (b) Love flows from God, as from its spring, in such way that the connection with its source remains unbroken. Love not only binds us together, it binds us together in God. It is his love which is manifested in us.
- (c) We take Jesus Christ as our model in many points of external conduct, and miss the fundamental example of his abiding confidence in the Father's love. It is the source of his life that we need to study even more deeply than its manifestation in daily life.

II.—*The history of fellowship.*

- (a) Love is not solitary. The eternal Trinity is a fact. Almighty God did not create because he was lonely, or because his heart was empty, as foolish people have sentimentally suggested. Love eternally has its exercise in the fellowship of the perfection of triune God.
- (b) The life of fellowship is the assurance of love (1 S. John iv. 12, 13). Herein we experience the divine love which is communicated to us. Much Christian depression is the result of failure to experience this fellowship, and the failure is due to our neglect to exercise the fellowship. We do not go out of ourselves to love God in our brethren.
- (c) Similarly the realization of love is found in the confession of Christ (1 S. John iv. 14, 15), for his love is communicated to us through the Son. This is the proving of the love of God to us, and is of more value to us than the assurance of our love to God.

III.—*The victory of fellowship* (1 S. John iv. 16).

- (a) The writer repeats: "God is love" from ver. 8. There it was used of the origin and knowledge of love; now of action and growth. The nature of the believer is conformed to the nature of God by virtue of the divine gift; so he that abideth in love abideth in God. The life of love is of necessity the life of fellowship with God.
- (b) Experience of this in life produces confidence. In this communion love finds its consummation, so that by conformity to Christ the last fear of life may be banished (1 S. John iv. 17). And this boldness is progressive—casts out fear by degrees—for as Christ is, so are we in this world; we are learning like him to live in the abiding confidence of the Father's love; we are receiving in him the realized communication of the Father's love.
- (c) Love is therefore both the activity of our filial relation to God in Christ, and is also a command. It is the command to put to the test the divine gift, and thereby to prove it. For the gift of God is life, and life involves movement and development. The consciousness of this divine gift as a power working in us, and within the society of God's family, is the victory of fellowship.

The Tone of a Christian

TENTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"If the trumpet give an uncertain sound."—1 Cor. xiv. 8. *"Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh."*—S. John iii. 8.

Consider: the tone of a musical instrument; what you mean by it, and what it produces.

Pray: that your life may be "By the Holy Ghost" (2 Cor. vi. 6).

I.—Consider the word "Tone."

- (a) Literally it is that which is stretched; hence it may be applied physically to the muscles and sinews. Its opposite is relaxation.
- (b) It is applied to the sound of a musical instrument, or the pitch of a voice. Its proper stretch is perceived by the trueness of the sound. The tone may be flat or sharp or uncertain. But the right tone is due to its permanently right stretch.
- (c) It is applied also to a man's general condition of physical health. He is said to be in a low tone of health, or to be in need of a tonic.

II.—A moral application.

- (a) We speak of the tone of a person, of a school, or of a club; and we say that the tone is good, or low, or worldly, or severe, and the like. What does this mean?
- (b) It describes the normal pitch of a person or a society; it is the average standard which has been attained. And it describes the general condition as others are impressed by it. The string of the instrument may be relaxed, but the test is in the tone when some one strikes the string. Hence tone is the general impression made upon others, and which they feel and unconsciously tend to reproduce. Tone makes its impression, but does not explain its cause. It is like the wind, which is felt, but one cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth.
- (c) The tone of a society varies with its purpose. The tone of the British Association should be scientific and open-minded. The tone of a school should be keen and self-forgetful. The tone of the Church should be spiritual. In each case tone expresses that proper stretch which any society or organization should have by reason of diligent application to its proper purpose.

III.—Spiritual tone.

- (a) Spirituality as a tone is just the ruling control of the Holy Spirit, the measure of his influence in the sum total of the individuals. It is the average standard by which the sum of its members is walking. It is marked by what is seen to come naturally; it is not what can be produced on special occasions. It is not what ought to be, but what is.
- (b) There is a heavy individual responsibility. Each person contributes to tone by his individual devoutness, by his consciousness of the presence of God, by his self-forgetfulness, by his spirit of mortification. The opposite to this is spiritual relaxation. Apply this to the interior life of prayer and holiness.
- (c) Tone is a result and not a cause. One does not aim after tone, but tone follows upon persistent aim after rightly adjusted relationship to one's true purposes. The great Christian practices and rules of life are the method, when loyally carried out in detail. But the source of our tone is the Holy Spirit. "By the Holy Ghost" is one of S. Paul's marks of a Christian minister. Consider how tone is illustrated by the words of our Lord to Nicodemus (S. John iii. 8). It is the hearing the sound thereof.

A Sinner's Prayer

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"God be merciful to me a sinner."—S. Luke xviii. 13.

Picture: the scene.

Examine yourself on this aspect of your prayers.

I.—*A sinner at prayer.*

- (a) Not all prayer by any means is for one's self, or about one's sins; but the devout Christian can never be unmindful in his prayers that it is a sinner who is addressing God; nor should this particular petition be often absent from his prayers; it need not be confined to the sinner who is conscious of separation from God, but it may be made the aspiration of the soul which is striving after the holiness which is of God.
- (b) Much prayer is ruined by the absence of "God" from it: no adequate realization of speaking to a person, less still of the character of the person addressed; the sin and the sinfulness are confessed, sometimes, it is to be feared, rather to relieve one's mind than to tell God. This danger lurks also in sacramental confession. It is well to wait before praying—public as well as private prayers—and to think of the presence of the Person.
- (c) There is often no thoughtful recollection of the person who speaks. In what frame of mind have I come to my prayers, and in what condition? In that part of my private prayers which is concerned with my own life, what do I need? What have I to-day to confess with my evening "Forgive us our trespasses"?

II.—*"Me, a sinner."*

- (a) "Me, sinner that I am" is the force of the original. It expressed the characteristic which brought him there: it goes deeper than "Forgive this sin." For this attitude of prayer there must be previous acquaintance with God, reverent consideration of his glory. The words seem to shut off all others in the deep spiritual experience of laying one's self open before God. Truly it is the prayer of the saints.
- (b) For such an one, realizing himself as such, to address God, against whom is all his sin, is an effort of filial confidence in him as both able and willing to minister to his needs. Realize this in prayer, and learn to use prayer filially, becoming more ready to resort to it as soon as you are conscious of sin, and learning therefrom to use it when temptation assails.
- (c) From the frequency of this prayer—in its spirit, not necessarily in its words—consider how great confidence in God will be acquired. It will cause the light of his countenance to shine upon you. How remote we often are from God, unacquainted with him, because we do not get closely into contact with him whose prerogative is to forgive!

III.—*"God, be merciful."*

- (a) Mercy is my need: an application of, a fellowship in, the great propitiation. Let a life's experience of prayer acquaint me more closely with this. Because forgiven, study to realize the contents of this divine reconciliation. Do not be content with an occasional application, when even the sinner himself can see that even to himself his state is parlous.
- (b) Much personal prayer is weakened by the failure to grasp the petition strongly. The man seeks God's presence, feels his own sinfulness, his one want, and yet does not expressly ask for immediate forgiveness, or asking does not wait to receive it, and so goes away not as forgiven. Even in sacramental confession there is a danger of paying too little attention to the absolution.
- (c) One further blessing follows the diligent application of this prayer throughout a lifetime, as of one who cannot too often hear the gracious words of mercy. By continual realization of sinfulness and of forgiveness, comes grace to help others to realize pardon, sympathy with them in their spiritual troubles, a great confidence in exhibiting the mercy of God which has been personally realized.

Grace

ELEVENTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"By the grace of God."—1 Cor. xv. 10.

Consider: S. Paul as exhibiting the life of grace.

Pray: "Oh! give me grace to follow."

I.—*Grace.*

- (a) The suddenly converted looks back over his life and says, "By the grace of God." S. Paul did so, but not merely because of his conversion, but also because of the whole course of his Christian life. And it is equally true for all Christians; we suffer if we do not ascribe to grace the continued progress and attained standard of our life.
- (b) The Pharisee in the Gospel was no doubt a good-living Jew, but he forgot to give glory to God. Nor does the parable suggest that the publican exaggerated his state; but he ascribed to grace, preventient and co-operating, its due force, and he realized the possibilities in himself of all manner of sins which grace alone restrained.
- (c) It is grace which shields us from the very knowledge of all manner of temptations from within and without, so that we may be complacently unaware of what the heart, if not thus protected, might lead us into. It is grace which disposes the will aright, but so secretly that we may think it to be natural to us. S. Paul, however, was not thus deceived. He had once fought against God believing that he did right, and he knew that it was grace which had illuminated his conscience.

II.—*"Not in vain, but I laboured."*

- (a) Grace is not irresistible: without response it will not be effectual. It is a very humiliating thought that much grace has been offered to me which I have failed to use or even to perceive:—grace to resist temptation, grace of good deeds, grace to take the higher course, grace of devotion and fervour.
- (b) S. Paul was not afraid to say, "But I laboured." The great apostle of grace recognized that he responded to grace with a good will, sought grace, valued it. It is the torpid will which leaves grace unused; it is self-confident pride of heart which says, "I laboured," and forgets to say that, "His grace was not in vain."
- (c) The thought of the possibility of resisting grace is a reminder of the need of perseverance. Nothing is more difficult in life than steady perseverance. The will may be directed in the morning, but during the day it becomes sluggish; the will may be set at the communion, but the grace given may not be fully used because perseverance fails; the will may be strong in early life, but the years of routine, and the battle of life, and the increasing age, when the spring of energy is less and regular habits have been formed, may lead to cessation of progress.

III.—*"Yet not I."*

- (a) Good will and perseverance: these are the response to grace. Then "I laboured." But S. Paul was not content to stop there; for good will and perseverance are gifts of grace. What right have I to claim these as my own contribution, when many another, better than I, and more single-minded, have fallen away from grace?
- (b) "The grace of God which was with me," or "The grace of God which worked with me." Either is true. Later in life S. Paul still experienced this. "No man stood with me . . . notwithstanding the Lord stood with me" (2 Tim. iv. 16, 17). It is not the saint who is most tempted to forget the gospel of grace, for it is only through a deep experience of its truth that a Christian ever becomes a saint: and a saint would fall if he failed in this appreciation.
- (c) S. Paul was a brilliant missionary with great gifts and unrivalled zeal: he converted Churches. When we do a little thing we plume ourselves upon it; S. Paul became frightened of himself lest he should abuse or ignore such gifts of God as worked with him. He became like the publican in the parable: "Sinners, of whom I am chief."

Revelation

ELEVENTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"By diverse portions and in diverse manners."—Heb. i. 1 (R.V.).

Picture: a ray of solar light passed through a prism is broken up into its component parts and is seen by us as the colours. God is not a ray of light, nor the sun, but the Light.

Revelation as perceived by us is to the Truth as the separated colours are to the sun.

Pray: that I may grow up into Christ in all things.

I.—*The partial revelation.*

- (a) The easiest interpretation of the words is in Jewish history. God spake in diverse portions, as we recognize by thinking of their history as a series of epochs or ages; and in diverse manners, by appearances, in the worship on the hill altars, in the teaching of prophets, in sacrificial ceremonial, in the discipline of national history, by apocalyptic.
- (b) The application is not confined to Jewish history, but it is through their history that we may perceive how he does reveal himself to nations. In prehistoric times, by means which we can scarcely follow, in tribal characteristics, national development; through philosophy, drama, art, religious speculation; through national experience and local environment.
- (c) God spake. His voice runs through all creation, whether in the course of nature or in the course of history. In his Son we may interpret more clearly; nature, history, science, all the avenues through which the intellect pursues knowledge, are voices of God.

II.—*"Hath spoken unto us in a Son."*

- (a) The pre-incarnate revelation was necessarily a broken one—in diverse portions and in diverse manners,—for it lacked the unity which is only possible with completeness. Hence the emphasis on "Son." The previous ages prepared in many ways for the universal gift "at the end of these days," and universal because complete.
- (b) The Son is presented therefore as creator, sustainer and heir; through whom and in whom and unto whom are all things. The goal of creation is the fulness of the Christ, "the Christ that is to be." And he is presented in his atonement and his heavenly session; as meeting the need of creation in its unity, and as in himself embracing the perfect restoration to union with God, while we see not as yet all things put under his feet.
- (c) The completeness of this revelation is further presented by a description of his person. He is the substantial manifestation of the invisible glory of God, and the very impress of the divine substance. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; "I and my Father are one."

III.—*The Christian revelation.*

- (a) As of old, so now in our reception of it, the complete revelation is appreciated by us in diverse portions and in diverse manners. We cannot afford to neglect the many voices in which God speaks; nor, because we interpret them through the living voice of the Son, can we suppose that we exhaust the revelation. God is unfolding to us the revelation of the Son as the generations come and go.
- (b) But the unity is in the Son; growing up into him we are growing up into the unity from which all proceeded, to which all returns. To the Christian nothing partial can be finally satisfactory; the Truth is greater than any human expression of it, and is the unifier of lines of revelation which appear to us as divergent or contradictory. In perplexity faith in Christ gives patience and confidence.
- (c) The warning of the epistle holds good to-day. Then there was danger lest in the break-up of the past men should lose faith, and grasping at the partial and passing-away should lose the complete and the permanent, in whom all that was abiding of the past found its solution. In our own age, when landmarks of thought seem about to be swept away, we must not cling to the partial but to him in whom all their truth is stored up, and he will interpret anew in fuller measure. To us the Christ is progressive.

The Yoke and the Burden

ELEVENTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."—S. Matt. xi. 30.

Picture: drawing with a yoke; carrying a burden. See Acts xv. 10, 28.

Resolve: to co-operate heartily with the exertion and the endurance which they demand.

I.—*The yoke.*

- (a) Mark the candour of Jesus Christ: he never entraps men into believing. He does not deny that there is a yoke of bondage, which demands the exertion of drawing, and a burden requiring the endurance of what is put upon us. The divine service will be hard and heavy or easy and light according as we do not respond whole-heartedly to it, or co-operate with it in sincerity.
- (b) The yoke is the mark of bondage: it suggests the exertion of drawing a load: the whole spiritual strength must be put forth to do the will of God. Communion, worship, prayer, holy reading are all parts of the yoke. Be not discouraged if for the present you feel them to be such: they are duties, and as such we have a right to use them: they will become more easy with use, and when our necks no longer chafe against the restraint of the yoke.
- (c) The framing of Christian character is part of the yoke. To shake off one sin is a great effort, sometimes the work of a lifetime: pass from a sin to all sins, and then to sin itself, and one realizes what the yoke implies by way of exertion. Then add the acquisition of graces.

II.—*The burden.*

- (a) The burden implies the endurance of what is put upon us, what we suffer, as against the yoke and its undertaking. All men have to bear the common burden of life, the Christian has to bear it as a Christian. He turns trouble into trial by seeing the divine hand in it.
- (b) Further he has to bear specifically Christian troubles; the unkindness caused by being a Christian: coldness, suspicion, isolation, contempt, taunts, ridicule, misunderstanding, or perhaps opposition, hatred, persecution. A burden is always more easily borne if boldly taken up with both hands and cheerfully carried, than when one groans over it.
- (c) Inward and spiritual burdens arising from the warfare with sin. Disappointed efforts, struggles between nature and grace, doubts of acceptance, self-reproach for slowness and back-sliding, doubts about truth, fears for the great cause, anxiety about eternity. Non-Christians scarcely know what these mean.

III.—*But easy and light.*

- (a) Comparatively. Every one is under some yoke, God or sin, Christ or self, good or evil. Compare these services. Is the world's yoke easy with its pushing and ambitions, its flattery of the successful, its pushing of failures out of sight? Is it enduring? Or the flesh? its appetites and lusts, its after-misery, fear of discovery and shame, old age of, remorse, looking for of judgment? Or the sins of the devil? the fire of jealousy, the gnawing pangs of hatred, the uneasiness of falsehood?
- (b) Progressively. Read Eccles. iv. 17, 18, which exactly explains the thought of this meditation. It is sin, original, actual, lingering, reviving, which makes the hardness and heaviness. In proportion as the self-centred heathenism of the heart yields itself to the rule of Christ the yoke lightens, and at last comes that maturity when the two wills shall be at one. At last, if not at first, easy and light.
- (c) Essentially. In virtue of love: if any earthly master can be loved, what of Christ? In virtue of its present reward; the sense of growth which is a man's happiness. In virtue of the indwelling Spirit, making the commandments not grievous (1 S. John v. 3, 4), drawing up the Christian heart to heavenly things, giving the victory through him who loved and loves.

Trust in Depression

ELEVENTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Doth Job fear God for nought?"—Job i. 9. "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him."—Job xiii. 15.

Picture: Job in the midst of his anguish, and consider God's great favour towards him even while he felt himself deserted.

Resolve: to trust in God through depression.

I.—*God's dealings.*

- (a) At first he leads his disciples gently: thus he encourages them, and gives them confidence in himself; he establishes in them an appreciation of his good gifts, gives them faith in prayer, and makes them feel the happiness of peace with himself. Particularly is this the case with the young.
- (b) Then comes dryness: He allows Satan spiritually to put forth his hand and touch all that he hath (Job i. 11). Prayer becomes dull and burdensome; God seems to have gone from it. Communion seems lifeless; public worship does not any more lift up the soul. One fears that one is slipping back, and God does not seem to have hold of life. Bible reading is monotonous.
- (c) Or, and perhaps in addition to the other, Satan is allowed to go further. "Skin for skin; yea all that a man hath will he give for his life." So Satan is allowed to touch his bone and his flesh; only his life is to be spared (Job ii. 4-6). Personal temptations assail; old enemies, believed to be gone for ever, come back with renewed vigour. New snares arise, and one seems worse than before.

II.—*Consider this experience.*

- (a) This is progress, not retrogression. Having learned that the Lord is gracious he would now strengthen his disciple to walk by faith and not by sight, to stiffen himself in prayer and worship. Only through this discipline can higher gifts be received. The disciple is to be the soldier, defying Satan's taunt that he will curse God to his face. God has greater confidence in you than Satan has: throughout Job is his servant (Job ii. 3; xlii. 8), faithful through failures, adhering to God.
- (b) Consider the great need for us to advance to the more difficult: to persevere in the life of sacramental communion when it is dully monotonous, that we may know to believe in the grace of God. Especially is there need to put foremost the will of God rather than your own edification; the two are identical, but you are no judge of what is best for you, and are seeking a false edification. Consider that you cannot lose God if you make his will your chief concern.
- (c) Some people have passed through this and arrived at the other side, only to find repeated experiences of it in a yet higher plane. By the trial of your own history pray for the grace of perseverance and trust for those who now suffer as you have suffered; and learn to have great sympathy and patience with the apparently spiritual fickleness of beginners.

III.—*Consider Job.*

- (a) With what boldness he defied Satan; certainly he was not forsaken of God while doing so, or how could he resist? Now look at the heavenly scene. God is over all and through all; he it is who has forbidden Satan to take his life (Job ii. 6; cf. Ps. xxxvii. 24); he enables Job to say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him."
- (b) Temptation may be withdrawn at first, but there is no real victory except through the conflict of overcoming. Job indeed did not resist faultlessly, any more than we can expect to. One does not blame a victor for having wounds. But he was blessed in having endured (James v. 11), and his end was great spiritual progress (Job xlii. 5, 6).
- (c) Ask now whether Job feared God for nought. When trial besets ask, Is it for my own ease of mind that I fear God, or that his will may be done in me? Prosperous Job had cleared his mind greatly before he passed to seeing God from the acquaintance of hearing him by the hearing of the ear.

· God's Power in Mercy and Pity

ELEVENTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him."—
2 Sam. xiv. 14.

Picture: King David restoring his guilty son to favour; and consider the collect Trinity XI.; "Who declarest thy almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity."

Resolve: to use this collect once to-day with this morning's meditation in mind.

I.—Consider the power of God.

- (a) In many ways he manifests his power impressively; in the natural order by the great catastrophes of storm and earthquake and the like. To all thoughtful people his power is more strikingly revealed in the upholding of creation; terrific as these forces are they work obediently to his will in the harmony which speaks to us of the mind that ordereth all things.
- (b) In judgment too his power is brought home to us. There is a terrible warning in the occasional sudden death of the defiant sinner, as *e.g.* the death of Herod as described in Acts, or the traditional account of Arius' death. But much more by the restraint and long-suffering of God we realize the true greatness of his power.
- (c) These illustrations suggest to us that his power is most chiefly declared in showing mercy and pity rather than in judgment and severity. They manifest the greatness of his power, as we may illustrate by a very partial parallel. The man who forgives has revealed greater power than he who was offended, the power to be master of himself, to put himself into the place of the other, and to be superior to the possible misinterpretation of forgiveness as weakness.

II.—Consider God's power in mercy and pity.

- (a) Of all exercises of his power this would seem to be the most striking, because the impediment of sin is the most terrible obstacle. His holiness makes forgiveness difficult; it is the depth of his wisdom and knowledge which makes it possible for him, for he sees the end of forgiveness.
- (b) By mercy and pity we may best understand forgiveness and grace. He exercises his mercy when he forgives instead of striking, and his pity when he vouchsafes help to our weakness. Or we may regard mercy as that aspect of his graciousness whereby he restrains the wrath of his holiness, and pity that whereby he is moved thereto through beholding our condition.
- (c) These qualities are indeed regal. The woman of Tekoah appealed to the kingly instincts of David when she urged him to recall Absalom. So Saul never showed himself more a king than when he said "There shall not a man be put to death this day" (1 Sam. xi. 13), and David said the same (2 Sam. xix. 22). The wise woman depicted God as the king devising means that his banished subject should not be expelled from his kingdom and from worshipping him.

III.—He deviseth means.

- (a) The words carry our thoughts behind the act of forgiveness to that exercise of the spirit of forgiveness which devises means whereby it may forgive. We may contrast the case of Darius (Dan. vi. 14), and so consider the power of God in that he is able to devise means for our delivery.
- (b) The words bid us think of that course of revelation which is loosely expressed by the term "Scheme of salvation." The regal heart is moved to bring about the restoration of his banished sons, not by allowing himself to be moved to a gracious forgiveness after duly humble petitioning, but by taking the initiative, and in such a way that the banished is restored without harm to the king's honour and with the reformation of his own self-damaged character.
- (c) This series of thoughts, commencing in the hidden counsels of God and not ending until the redeemed are gathered home, is the grandest exposition of his power as declared in mercy and pity. Righteousness, wisdom and love are revealed in fellowship, and wisdom is justified of her children.

The Strenuousness of Hope

ELEVENTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Let me not be disappointed of my hope."—Ps. cxix. 116 (P.B.V.).

Picture: the concentrated energy of one who has set his heart upon obtaining some competitive post of great value.

Resolve: to pay attention to this antiphon of ferial Sext.

I.—"My hope."

- (a) Hope is the spring of life's energy. Some lose hope as life goes on, because it was only based upon the high spirits of youthfulness. Aspiration dies away when there is no realization of hope. Please God it may not be so with us who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. This hope is to be the great ideal of life, expanding under partial realization, always sending one on and up.
- (b) Watch this hope, for sometimes as life goes on it tends to become centred round self, instead of widening out from self; to become *my* hope rather than *my Hope*. Or the very carefulness of life may involve the risk of losing sight of the end in the means, of principles in details. But our hope is in God himself: "Blessed are the pure (single) in heart, for they shall see God."
- (c) This hope is both present and future: "Christ in you the hope of glory." "That ye may walk worthy of God your Caller into his own Kingdom (now) and glory (hereafter)" (1 Thess. ii. 12, paraphrased). The realization of the hope is progressive, but the hope itself is a present possession. Strive to enter into and appreciate this present hope; and "he that hath this hope set on him (*i.e.* on Christ) purifieth himself."

II.—"Disappointed."

- (a) The hope itself is not disappointing. Stimulus is one of the least qualities of this hope: among its greater qualities are progressive satisfaction, inexhaustibleness, the gifts of fixed purpose and expanding desire. The Christian who cherishes his hope is ever realizing that the half was not told him.
- (b) Disappointment can only come by falling short: and this generally by losing the ideal through neglect to appropriate and thereby to press forward. All are conscious of the possibility of this disappointment, while never daring to think that Almighty God is unsatisfying or faithless.
- (c) But the truth of hope removes depression from the thought of perseverance. Jesus, as a forerunner, has entered on our behalf into heaven; thither, in the storms of life, hope continually penetrates; indeed, hope such as this is like an anchor, sure against outside forces, and steadfast in its firmness. Thus the apostle boldly describes Christians as keeping a firm grip upon the hope lying before them (Heb. vi. 18-20).

III.—"Let me not."

- (a) A prayer for perseverance unto the end. The twofold character of hope as a future already grasped gives strength for this prayer. "Let me not be confounded at the last" (Te Deum). Consider, first, the confidence of this prayer as the mind stretches out towards the great future, penetrating within the veil. He is sufficient; he is willing.
- (b) Then consider the words as a prayer for present grace. We have fled for refuge and grasped the hope, with a grasp which grasps us. We look up boldly, sustained by this present gift, and say, "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe." Like S. Peter we are walking on the waters to go to Jesus. But, being afraid, we cry, "Lord, save me"; "and immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him."
- (c) The words of the antiphon express the true spirit of Christian humility: *Non nobis, non nobis, Domine*. How profitable to use these words day by day, in the heat of activity, in the mid-day of energy and self-confidence, as well as in the crises of conscious inability and depression!

Deaf and Slow of Speech

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Deaf and had an impediment in his speech."—S. Mark vii. 32.

Picture: the scene.

Pray: for closer conformity to the will of God in some way.

I.—*The man's disease.*

- (a) By contrast with others his disease appears almost trifling. Our sympathy goes out to the leper, isolated from human society; to the paralytic, unable to help himself. The blind man appeals to our pity more than does the deaf; we feel his loss as he gropes about. But the deaf man is more often the cause of impatience in us. He vexes by his desire to share in our life and the demand made upon our voice.
- (b) His life was ineffectual and powerless. He could watch life and appreciate it, but his opportunity to share in it was terribly limited by his inability to hear and his difficulty in speech. Yet, while thus cast off, he was conscious that but for these impediments he was capable of taking his proper place in society.
- (c) The joy and sparkle of life were gone. He had to look on, and feel himself left on one side and regarded as a burden. He could neither express his emotions naturally, nor hear the joys of others. Thus he could neither take his part nor his pleasure in life, while yet he could see others full of joy and envy them.

II.—*Deaf.*

- (a) We are often more aroused to the pity of the spiritual leper, paralytic or blind, than to that of the spiritually deaf. How few there are who find their vocation in helping onwards the poor sort of Christians, who are slow to be aroused by the voice of God, unless he shout; who will not sin grievously, but who do not quickly respond to the gentle voice which points out the higher way (S. Mark vii. 32)!
- (b) But think, too, whether we are not among the deaf, with whom is no familiar intercourse with God in the daily life; who stand watching the spiritual life around them, wishing they could join in it. Is there in us anything of the flatness and monotony of the deaf man's life?
- (c) There cannot be elevation of spirit where there is this deafness. One watches the outside world, but is turned in upon one's self for unsatisfying fellowship. Seek its removal first in careful attention to his voice, not being distracted from it by carelessness or by concentration on self. Gradually the ears will become stronger, and one will enter into the fellowship of others' lives.

III.—*Impediment of speech.*

- (a) Deafness is often related to dumbness. Such unready to hear God's voice may spiritually be clearly connected with impediment of speech. How can the tongue be loosed with God, if one does not listen to his voice? And thus, where this defect is, there is also impediment of speech with God in confession and praise. The word of gratitude is got out with difficulty.
- (b) Slow to witness for him before others because deaf. More often one is silent, and when one speaks it is with stammering tongue. How can the tongue which is tied with God, be freely loosed to speak of him? We can only speak freely of that with which we are familiar.
- (c) Hence there is no glow of holiness in life; no effectual power or sparkling joy. And men say that religion is a burden, which makes life unhappy and troublesome. What false impression of life is given by the deaf Christian with a stammering tongue! Be quick to turn aside from the multitude with him and be healed.

The Sigh of Jesus

TWELFTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"He sighed."—S. Mark vii. 34.

Picture: Jesus Christ in a Gentile district, sighing over this man whose ailment was typical.

Resolve: to share with him this sigh of being in an alien land.

I.—*He sighed.*

- (a) He never lost the power of sympathy through familiarity with physical suffering. He entered into it, bore its sadness, relieved it where he could. It is indifference which deadens the heart to the pathos of familiar sights.
- (b) He sighed now over a sick case which was typical of the spiritual state of the district: they had charity to bring this man to him to be healed, but were unconscious of the spiritual healing which they needed from him. Decapolis lay near to Judæa, but felt no need of its religion. Nothing about the world is sadder than its vicinity to the Church, and its natural kindness, together with its ignorance of its real needs.
- (c) He sighed too as he foresaw the crowds which would gather from the disregard of his order of silence (vers. 36, 37; S. Matt. xv. 30, 31). Yet he submitted himself into their hands, healed their sick, preached to the crowds, fed four thousand of them. How contrary to this is the spirit of many of his servants, who are offended because the world is not conscious of thirsting for the sacraments! Should we not rather share his sigh, and then do what we can?

II.—*He sighed for the man himself.*

- (a) His sickness was typical of his spiritual condition: deaf to the voice of God, stammering in speech to him. The impediment in the world's speech with God is unrecognized and so unconfessed sin. It has not heard the voice of God walking in the garden of life, saying, "Where art thou?"
- (b) He sighed over the coming disregard of his commands. He put a charge of silence on him for his own good, lest the fruits of his healing should be dissipated before they produced eternal benefits. Here too the man is typical of the modern Decapolis, which looks for revival excitements and religious advertisement, rather than for the deep things of God.
- (c) There was no impatience in the sigh. The man disobeyed, but his diseases did not return to him. The life-long deafness and impediment may be cured, and the man who has found healing in him may yet be very inattentive to his words. Surely the sigh says much to us of God's patience with ourselves, who often come rather to be healed of the diseases which trouble us than to do his will.

III.—*He sighs.*

- (a) The incarnate God by a human sigh can express to us the mind of God. Study to see the revelation of God in human expression: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Not only for the world but for the Church also must God, in the language of our meditation, sigh.
- (b) There is often a weight of depression over his disciples from the sense of impotence. He sighs with us in this, in sympathy with our depression who live in Decapolis; for us also, because we so often bear our depression alone, and forget his sigh. For us, too, because, conscious of our impotence, we do not remember his power. His Church, which "with Babylon must cope," also sighs: she must represent his mind.
- (c) Let it be an ambition of Christian life to have fellowship with him in his sigh; to be unselfish, to have the mind of Christ. How can we be indifferent to the joys which the world is just missing? or to the contentment with which many Christians rest in their first healing? or to being ourselves strangers to the experiences of the sacred Heart?

God's Sufficiency

TWELFTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Our sufficiency is of God."—2 Cor. iii. 5.

Consider: the faith of the first missionaries to any heathen country.

Resolve: to make acts of faith when despondent.

I.—*Not sufficient of ourselves.*

- (a) This must be realized if the truth of the meditation is to be appreciated. Not sufficient of ourselves to undertake the Christian course. We should have to undo the history of the human race if we would be sufficient of ourselves to be united to God. Of all acts of grace this union with himself is the most profound; the life of grace, albeit wonderful, is rather the exhibition of what is involved in this initial act.
- (b) Not sufficient even, when grafted into Christ, to continue in him of ourselves. The initial act involves indeed the continual supply of life; nevertheless the Christian life is not an unbroken experience of grace's triumph. On the contrary, Christian life is experienced as a struggle in which the individual is continually experimenting in his own sufficiency and finding it insufficient.
- (c) The Epistle makes a special application to the Christian minister. The sufficiency is not in him, in his life, or in his word; he must not exalt preaching above sacraments, faithful work above prayer. Ever he must rely upon the *able* ministry of the covenant of the Spirit, that testament of grace abounding. What is true of the Christian priesthood is true in like manner of the ministry of every child of God, however attractive or zealous or strong he may be. He may draw others to himself; it requires the grace of God to draw them to him.

II.—*Our sufficiency is of God.*

- (a) We should be the stronger for dwelling upon this more often, whether in regard to the individual life in relation to its external conditions, or in the history of spiritual experiences and trials. In many affairs a strong hopefulness is half the battle; but while the hopefulness of self-confidence is fatuous, the encouragement from reliance upon God is a great deal more than the giving of courage; it is the disposition towards him which he rewards greatly with gifts corresponding to needs.
- (b) Consider more often the inherent power of the gospel. We laugh at preaching, and try to persuade through tricks. But S. Paul said, "Not in word only but in power and much assurance." We are afraid whether people will rise to the gospel; we should consider the power of the gospel to lift them up. So in daily life we are afraid of the testimony of Christian living to convert men; we forget the inherent power of truth, and the witness to God hidden in men's hearts.

III.—*Suggested applications.*

- (a) The Gospel illustrates the meditation. What might not the deaf and dumb man have pleaded in extenuation of almost any fault! His incapacity to enter into life might almost excuse him if he became brutish. But he found his sufficiency in him who healed his defects. How often have we pleaded that our spiritual sloth and neglect of devotion are due to lack of aptitude; or that we are naturally low-spirited and the like, forgetting the power of the divine Ephphatha?
- (b) The collect rightly says that he is more ready to hear than we to pray, and speaks of the abundance of his mercy. Here the sick man was brought by others, although he could see and walk. It was their initiative. It exemplifies the truth of intercession; and it is the spiritually deaf and dumb who most need it. Intercession is an almost unknown power, and therein lies a great unveiling of the divine sufficiency.
- (c) But the sufficiency of God is also wonderfully illustrated in the divine hopefulness and patience. He healed the man who showed no initiative; he endured the disregard of his order. Acquire from his sufficiency something of this divine optimism, and let it characterize the brightness and patience of life. Above all, let there be an extravagance of dependence upon his sufficiency.

The Contemplation of God

TWELFTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"But that the world may know that I love the Father."—S. John xiv. 31.
"And translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love."—Col. i. 13 (R.V.).

Picture: the Church as the expression of the love of the Father and the Son to each other.

Resolve: to meditate more upon God and less upon self.

I.—*God and Man.*

- (a) Consider that the true basis of reconciliation lies within the unity of the Blessed Trinity. Jesus Christ went to his death that the world might know that he loved the Father. The Father assures us of his forgiveness in that he receives us into the kingdom of his Son. Thus the Christian revelation is an unveiling to us of the unchangeable basis of the divine dispensation of mercy.
- (b) This foundation of the gospel is to become a great incentive to the deepening of our lives, who often regard reconciliation with God superficially, not apprehending its dependence upon the fellowship of the Father and the Son, nor appreciating it as an unspeakable gift.
- (c) This truth is also to become a strong consolation to the spiritually downcast. Many gravely minded Christians, conscious of their unworthiness, and that their lives do not manifest the fellowship of God and man involved in reconciliation, are doubtful about themselves. Let such regard the mutual love of the Father and the Son as the assured basis of their acceptance in the Beloved.

II.—*Our Saviour: God and Christ* (Titus i. 3, 4).

- (a) A superficial view is satisfied to regard the love of Christ as manifested in the gospel record, and to assume that this love moved him to become man. On such love, unless most powerfully realized, we are apt to trespass, behaving as spoilt children. Much emotional religion lacks solid foundation; it is the religion of pious feelings.
- (b) But consider that the love of Christ our Saviour for the world is the expression of his love to the Father, who himself so loved the world. S. John records that on the eve of his Passion he said that he was constrained by the motive of convincing the world of his love to the Father, whom he was obeying by going forth to die.
- (c) The converse to this is the love of the Father to his Son, as the deepest assurance to the Christian heart. It is because of this love of the Father to his Son that we are assured in him of the promised blessings (Col. i. 13, 14; Eph. i. 6). S. Paul has expressed this most simply in the words, "He that spared not his only Son . . . how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

III.—*Considerations.*

- (a) In practical religion there is a great danger of making self the centre of one's spiritual life. In N.T. we find an abandonment of self, a constraining of the love of Christ, which puts us to shame. Let the practical thoughts of this meditation be an instruction to the heart, leading it to dwell far more on the glory of God, assured that if we honour him, he will not be unfaithful to us.
- (b) This solid founding of the Christian revelation upon the unity of the Father and the Son in the Spirit is the training of the heart in that Christian assurance, so largely dwelt upon in N.T. and so little realized by most Christians. We are at peace with God through Jesus Christ: he has accepted us in him: the forgiveness of sins is assured to us because of the Father's love to the Son. Dwell on this solid foundation, and therein find joy, peace and fellowship (1 S. John i. 1-4).
- (c) Take this unchanging truth boldly in the face of its apparent contradiction in the experience of sin. We sin because we are self-centred, instead of being lost to self in the contemplation of God. And our sin produces scruples; but God's arm is not waxed short. And too, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things." This meditation should be a revelation of the immeasurable patience of God with us.

The Veil on the Heart

TWELFTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"The veil shall be taken away."—2 Cor. iii. 16.

Picture: the scene described in Exod. xxxiv. 29 ff.

Resolve: to allow no conscious veil between myself and Christ.

I.—*The veil on the face of Moses.*

- (a) As Moses came down from his mount of transfiguration his face shone: but the glory was transient. To hide this glory and its transience, he put a veil over his face. When he went back to commune with God, he withdrew the veil and renewed his illumination. A parable of the devotional life.
- (b) The revelation of Sinai had its exceeding glory, because it was a revelation of the righteousness of God. But its glory could not be looked upon, because it was not a glory which brought salvation with it. It was a ministration of death, that is of condemnation.
- (c) But its glory was transient: because the glory which condemns must fade away by comparison with the glory which redeems. To crush one's enemy is a less glory than to reconcile him. The former may be blinding for the moment, the latter is permanent. So then the glory of the Sinaitic dispensation could only be temporary, because the full revelation of God must be the highest possible glory, namely life and not death.

II.—*The veil done away in Christ.*

- (a) This glory exceeds by far the former glory, in that it is unto life and is therefore not transient. There is no need to hide it by a veil, that we should not look steadfastly on the end of that which is passing away. The vision of Christ is a permanent possession.
- (b) And this glory can be endured by the power of sacramental union with the incarnate Christ. "We beheld his glory, glory as of the Only-begotten from the Father." The redeemed can gaze into the face of God: the veil of the temple has been rent, and the way into the Holy place made manifest.
- (c) The glory thus openly manifested transfigures us as we gaze upon it (2 Cor. iii. 18, R.V.). The divine Son is the effulgence of the Father's glory; as we reflect this glory by gazing on him, so by degrees it is to transfigure us into the very image of Christ (see Rom. viii. 29).

III.—*The veil lying on the heart.*

We may picture the veil no longer indeed as over the revelation, but as over the heart which does not receive the inpouring of its illuminating glory (2 Cor. iv. 4). And this thought may be illustrated in various ways from the lives of those who verily receive the light of Christ, but by some impeding veil obscure the transfiguring power of its penetrating rays, and so reflect it but dimly.

- (a) The veil of self-sufficiency. Contrast yourself with S. Paul: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to account anything as from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. iii. 5). Oh! when shall we cease to impede the reflection of his glory by thrusting our own persons in the way? We must learn to ascribe everything to grace.
- (b) The veil of self-deception. There are many degrees of this short of the fatal self-deception. "Until this day" we adhere in many things to the letter, through prejudice and habit, and neglect the spirit (2 Cor. iii. 6). And we remain ignorant of our deficiency; and where we are most blind we think we see.
- (c) The veil of spiritual depression. We do not enter fully into the liberty of the sons of God, and so he is not glorious to us (2 Cor. iii. 17 f.; iv. 6). We darken the face of God. The great corrective to depression is to see the King in his beauty upon mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem.

The Lord's Hand not waxed Short

TWELFTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Is the Lord's hand waxed short?"—Num. xi. 23.

Picture: the complaints of Moses to Jehovah that too much was demanded of him.

Resolve: to prove that the Lord's hand is not waxed short.

I.—*Apostolic days.*

- (a) In the earliest days of the Church the presence of the Holy Spirit was realized by all Christians, and was manifest to unbelievers also. The Christians had convictions; outsiders had opinions. Unbelievers saw that the religion of Christians was the basis of their lives; it had reality. And the Christians knew that this reality was the work of God; the Holy Spirit illuminated their understandings, and took possession of their wills.
- (b) Within the Church this power was most strikingly experienced in the mark of sanctity. Through the Holy Ghost lives sunken in sin became refined and gentle, characters were transformed, temptation was resisted and overcome. There was no need to talk much about the sacraments, when men felt their power and knew their need of them.
- (c) When we contrast England of to-day with the earliest ages of the Church, we are impressed by the courage and strength of character which were manifested then. The Christians endured to be the laughing-stock of the world; they suffered the spoiling of their goods. The Christianity which conquered the Roman world was a force.

II.—"Is the Lord's hand waxed short?"

- (a) Our heart is rebuked for its shrinking faith. Has the Holy Spirit grown weak in our days? Study the history of foreign missions if you want a tonic for drooping spirits. Compare India with the Roman Empire. Study the progress of the faith in China. Find out from missionaries if there is any difference between their converts and the heathen.
- (b) Look at home and consider the difficulties of belief; consider how every searcher after truth has to struggle for the right to hold his faith, if he is to grasp it as his own. Realize the fiery trial that young men pass through in workshops, in country life, in city houses. Is the Lord's hand waxed short?
- (c) In the cold unbelief of our hearts as to any power in Christian grace we are shocked at every fault and weakness as an act of disloyalty, and do not look to see the Holy Spirit change weakness into strength. If we were more sympathetic with life we should continually be observing evidence of Pentecost in our midst.

III.—*England and the apostolic age.*

- (a) There are changes in the condition of Christianity which make it easy for us to think that the Lord's hand is waxed short. Christianity is nominally the religion of England, and we complain of the smallness of our congregations. We have accepted a conventional Christianity, and are surprised that so few evidence the power of religion. It is the first work of the Church to-day to believe in the Holy Ghost, and not any longer to pretend that all are Christians.
- (b) Primitive Christianity was aggressive; it did not live and let live. Our own is likely to die of respectable inanity. Even the faithful are built up to spiritual indulgence rather than to spiritual energy. The worst aspect of priestcraft dominates us; we have a clergy who have appropriated to themselves the whole task of dealing with the unconverted. We must not fear to send all the faithful out into the world with the Holy Ghost to test his power.
- (c) As we fear to experiment boldly with the divine power, so by the application of the spiritual law (S. Matt. xiii. 12) we are ceasing to believe in it. We expect God's hand to be short, and we grumble that he demands so much of us. In apostolic days the task before the Church was so impossibly big that Christians were educated in believing the power of the Holy Ghost. Learn to pray as believing that he can do miracles to-day.

Made Whole

TWELFTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*Wilt thou be made whole?*"—S. John v. 6.

Picture: the scene.

Resolve: to submit myself to God in some matter which I have hitherto withheld from him.

I.—*The question implies the presence of disease.*

- (a) Often the disease is not perceived, as may be the case with physical disease. This is especially likely to be so with superficiality, coldness, lack of perseverance in devotion, indifference as to progress, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Or unlovely characteristics are disguised under pleasant names; lack of sympathy as strength, temper as zeal, etc.
- (b) Or the disease is not recognized as such. The power of it is not felt, because there is no resistance. Hence we often flatter ourselves that we can cure a spiritual disease whenever we like; mortal disease is regarded as quite a trifling ailment; thus pride or ambition is looked upon as scarcely worth notice.
- (c) Often a disease is preferred to its cure, especially if the cure involve length of time, or is a painful and self-denying process. We are not conscious of the deadly character of the disease, and we shrink from the application of the scalpel.

In none of these cases is there the *will* to be made whole.

II.—"*Wilt thou?*"

- (a) God cannot act without our consent. The question shows us our greatness and our responsibility. Even God consents to ask. Sometimes we may wish that he did not await our consent; but it is necessary. Not the mere removal of evil, but the growing up of the whole man towards God is required.
- (b) But the very question is a stirring of the will (S. John vi. 44). If the will is bound, it is by our consent; if no will, then no man. Nor is the will to be identified with the inclination and desires: God alone can order the unruly will, and he can strengthen the weak will to endure the mortification of the inclinations. It is for us to call him in.
- (c) The question reminds of the individuality of the man. We try to escape in the crowd: let us thank him for everything which takes us aside from the multitude, and stirs the will. That stirring is his voice, and it awakens attention, hope, effort in one who had fallen into apathy.

III.—"*Be made whole.*"

- (a) The gospel offers nothing less, and will accept nothing less. Many desire to be made partly whole, to be cured of fleshly disease, while the intellect wills to be independent. Or we would pick and choose, for we dislike some spiritual things.
- (b) Whole. The promise of the gospel is restoration to a state of soundness. The gospel itself is sound, healthy, embracing all aspects of life. Sound in body; it strikes a triumph note of victory. Sound in mind: whenever we would make anything sickly, ludicrous, morbid out of the gospel, take care! That is not the gospel. Sound in spirit; sin is the consumption of the soul; Christ promises a sound conscience and a sound heart.
- (c) The will co-operates, but it is not the efficient cause. He says, "*Be made whole.*" It is a fundamental lesson of the Christian life that all is by the grace of God.

IV.—*Consider some of the answers.*

- (a) "What lack I yet?" S. Matt. xix. 20. Self-satisfaction.
- (b) "Go thy way for this time," Acts xxiv. 25. Apathy.
- (c) "Sir, I have no man," S. John v. 7. Difficulty.
- (d) "I have spent my strength for nought and in vain," Isa. xlix. 4. Despair.
- (e) "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian," Acts. xxvi. 28. Trifling with reality.
- (f) "What shall I do, Lord?" Acts xxii. 10. Personal conviction.

Seeing God in all Life

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see."—S. Luko x. 23.

Picture: the Seventy full of joy on their return.

Resolve: to apply this lesson to one's meditations.

I.—*The contexts.*

- (a) Compare S. Matt. xiii. 16. In the one case the Seventy had returned full of joy that even the devils were subject unto them "in his Name." It was a grand discovery, calculated to excite them. On the other occasion the Twelve had asked him to interpret to them a parable, and he explained that to them he would do so, but to others he must speak in parables. It was a case of "To him that hath shall be given."
- (b) On both occasions the comparison is made with prophets and kings or righteous men, who desired to see and had not seen. What more could they do than desire? But in this age opportunity was given which was withheld from them: blessed therefore were they, the Twelve or the Seventy, who could reap the blessing of the opportunity, whereas to the majority it was lost. The gift of spiritual desire and sight put them on a level with the worthies of earlier ages.
- (c) Some have thought that the context could not be right in both places; but it is very probable that those and other like striking expressions were frequently repeated, that they might sink in. What lesson was more needed in those days than that of the superior value of desire over any opportunity external to one's self. Opportunity is in itself a great responsibility rather than a blessing.

II.—*Some broad lessons.*

- (a) The Twelve and the Seventy were the sons of the kings, prophets, and righteous men. Others saw the miracles; many heard the parables; but they did not consider that the miracles were done "in his Name," nor had been eager to ask the meaning of the parable. The appeal of Christ is not to the average attention, still less to the casual or condescending. It is to the highest. There is danger of a too cheap gospel.
- (b) And it is not easy to see. To each in his own age there are signs, but they demand attention; there is sufficient opportunity, but not compelling. Before Christ the light was dim; in his days he was a stumbling-block; now the light is very complex. The external course of events presents itself as a natural sequence, and the order of nature, scientifically analysed, is offered as a solution of cause.
- (c) And this spiritual sight is not the luxury of the intellectually superior. "I thank thee, O Father, that thou . . . didst reveal them unto babes" (S. Luke x. 21). If spiritual sight is the privilege of the few it is because few will give singleness of will and purpose to the study of God's spiritual laws in history and life.

III.—*Some applications.*

- (a) We shut God out from politics, national and social problems, and confine him to the isolation of private and personal religion, and then necessarily fail to see the parables of history, life's symbols, whereby he is ever revealing himself. The history even of a family is made natural to us, when with the prayer of faith we might be seeing the good hand of our God upon us.
- (b) We do not consider our responsibilities for beliefs and opinions. There is a sceptical indifference which is due to the fact that we have not spiritual eyesight. The things visible absorb us, and we give no attention to strain after the things invisible. And so we come to think that there is nothing behind the worldly philosophy of life, nothing spiritual in the judgments, principles, and convictions of the mind. We lack spiritual reverence.
- (c) And what do we see of that Life of lives as it has taken hold of us? Are the devils subject to us "in his Name"? Does he speak to us in words which we can hear, unfolding to us the parable of life in deep secrets of eternal truth? Do our hearts burn within us as he unfolds to us the Scriptures? And does he make himself known to us in the breaking of the Bread?

The Purpose of Life

THIRTEENTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"By chance"—"As he journeyed."—S. Luke x. 31, 33.

Picture: the scene.

Resolve: to consider the purpose of life.

I.—"By chance"—"As he journeyed."

- (a) To outward sight priest, Levite, and Samaritan were all alike. No doubt each was travelling on some business, and the stranger was not his concern. Neither of the first two regarded himself as callous for not attending to him; some one else was sure to pass soon, less busy than he; or, the road was dangerous; or, he would not know what to do if he stopped to speak to him, seeing that he could not be expected to take him to the next town, and look after him.
- (b) Superficially we might think that the Samaritan, because he was journeying, had business, and therefore would have less leisure than the priest who came "by chance," or the Levite who came and looked. As a matter of fact, it is the busy people who have time to do something more. Purpose and diligence have a bracing effect on character.
- (c) But the words used are part of the emphatic setting of the parable, which relates the travellers to the victim of the robbery. In the same way the travellers are emphasized as a priest, a Levite, and pre-eminently a Samaritan. Religious principle and brotherly feeling may fail to stir, while kindly human instinct may respond to the will of God.

II.—"By chance."

- (a) To some life is a chance. God is not behind it as a directing purpose. Things *happen*. This temper may manifest itself in selfishness, or in casualness, or in mere purposelessness. Such varieties are symptoms; the disease is in the neglect to consider "Whence we come and whither wending."
- (b) Such lives do not share with the psalmist the experience that "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." When evil comes he cannot bless God; when in perplexity he does not turn at once to him who directeth his path. To him Almighty God is Providence when his affairs prosper, but when tribulation ariseth he is offended.
- (c) To him chances are not God's occurrences; he sees no divine significance in little things. He lets his opportunities pass by unheeded, whether of receiving grace or of doing the will of God. He requires an obvious crisis before the chance of life is transformed into facing reality. And all this while he does not realize that he is letting God's calls upon him slip by.

III.—"As he journeyed."

- (a) But to the Samaritan life was a journey, a purpose, and at the back of that purpose lay the will of God. His business and God's will did not clash as rivals, for God's will was his business. The natural events of life, as they are termed, may be seen by him in the retrospect to have been a guidance.
- (b) This journey is indeed full of divinely appointed incidents. God led him to that spot for the purpose of tending this man, and what he did for him he did to God. How many lives would be raised above the disappointment of not being able to do anything for God, if they realized that all their life was portioned out for them, and that the things by the way, while they are doing their daily duty, are the things which God has sent them to meet.
- (c) The life of purpose which journeyed with God led the Samaritan to make himself neighbour to the Jew. What seeming impossibilities have been accomplished in this way, whereby they have become the only thing to do, and not seeming to call for question; forgiving one's enemy, or nursing loathsome diseases, and the like. It is the divine companionship which points out such things.

Taking Care of Him

THIRTEENTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Take care of him."—S. Luke x. 35.

Picture: the infant Saviour in his cradle throne. He has come down from heaven to take care of mankind. To do this, he commits himself in many ways to our keeping, of which the picture is symbolic. Consider the words "Take care of him" in various applications.

Resolve: faithfulness.

I.—*To the world in the Incarnation.*

- (a) Reflect upon the Father's tender love to his beloved Son, in committing him to the world under the conditions of humanity. He commends him to the world's care. Dwell upon the trial to this divine love in view of the world's reception of him.
- (b) Consider the trust placed by God in the world. As yet we see it but very partially justified, but "Wisdom is justified of her children." God does not misplace his trust, but he trusts more deeply than we: "Love never faileth." We respond to this trust according to the degree in which we are ready to sacrifice ourselves to the world, assured that sacrifice is victory.
- (c) The words present a measure of God's love to the world. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son." He foreknew all—and yet he gave.

II.—*We may apply the words to the Church, to whom the dispensation of Christ is given. What intimacy of mutual relationship that he, who upholds the Church, and apart from whom she is not, should also entrust himself to her in the ministration of the Word and Sacraments.*

- (a) She is to take care of him in the bold assertion of his monarchical claims as the ruler of a divine kingdom, with which he will allow no tampering. In her hands the majesty of Christ must not suffer loss of dignity.
- (b) She is to take care of him in the unapproachableness of his self-abnegation, the infinite value of his precious blood, the inexhaustibleness of his patience. In no degree is this abandonment of self-esteem, whereby he loves to the uttermost, to be curtailed. It is his crowning glory, and she must not rob him of it through fear of any abuse of his goodness.
- (c) There is a very tender application of the words to the Church's care of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Loyalty to him in his revelation is to be matched by devotion to his person. In the Blessed Sacrament the two are united; for it is the centre of dogma, and in it loyalty to the revelation of truth is perceived to be devotion to himself. Majesty and self-abandonment meet in this mystery.

III.—*The words are applicable to the individual Christian.*

- (a) He is to take care of Christ before unbelievers and the indifferent. To him Christ has committed in some measure his reputation. Neither as the friend nor as the servant of Christ may he refuse to guard his honour.
- (b) His will and his courage to do this are dependent on the grace of taking care of him in his own heart, that is, by learning of him. When Christ is truly dear to us, his honour is of greater concern to us than our own ease. To take care of him requires at least this, that we keep our hearts with all diligence that he may find a resting-place there, where he will be welcomed as an honoured guest.
- (c) The centre of this personal religion is in the devout life of communion: to take care of him thus, welcoming him, receiving him with honour, cherishing his visits, renewing them in spiritual communion, praying to be made more worthy to receive him.

The Gospel Dispensation

THIRTEENTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."—Gal. iii. 21.

Picture: the contrast in experience between S. Paul the Christian, and Saul the Pharisee.

Resolve: to dwell more in gratitude upon the grace of being a Christian.

I.—*The dispensation of the law.*

- (a) Law is always there: it is the principle of the Creator's holiness. The law of right and wrong is not a dispensation chosen by God: it is like a law of nature; it always acts. All that can be done is to reveal the principle upon which it acts. And like a law of nature it has force; no man by resisting can set it at naught; he can only make its direction different. We express this truth when we say that sin brings its own punishment.
- (b) But S. Paul speaks of the law as being given: by this he means a special dispensation, which is an application of the eternal principle to special circumstances, and which acts as a revelation of the principle. The particular case which he has in mind is the Mosaic law: but there are many other cases, less obvious; God has many dispensations for different ages and races of men.
- (c) A revelation of law cannot give life. It can only partially reveal the principle, and thereby throw man upon God: it has no power of assistance, i.e. of grace; law is inexorable. And, too, it can only partially reveal the principle, by illustrating it. It cannot reveal God except as a law.

II.—*The dispensation of the gospel.*

- (a) The Christian can say, "Grant that we may so faithfully serve thee in this life," because the principle of righteousness has been revealed in Jesus Christ. He no longer carries out an isolated series of injunctions, but follows a universal principle, applying it to every act of his life.
- (b) S. Paul describes this gospel dispensation as a promise. It is a promise because based on mutual confidence: "Abraham believed God." Partly also, because long deferred, whereas wages earned would seem to be paid at once. And yet again, because a free gift of God's favour, and not a natural law.
- (c) This free gift of the promise is God's good-will toward us (eudokia). This is grace or faith according to the point of view. And this good-will vouchsafed to us is the great principle of righteousness and life, for life is righteousness, and the end of the gospel, which is life, must be righteousness.

III.—*The Gospel for the week illustrates this principle.*

- (a) In the sphere of God's good-will, which is the family of God; everybody is my neighbour. No law could reveal this, although it could educate the human mind toward it: but only in the Incarnation is the truth made manifest, because only through the Incarnation is it realized. Christ has made all men brethren. The Christian society is the expression of this truth in life.
- (b) For unhealthy sentiment or for undisciplined feelings is substituted the test of practical righteousness—"Go and do thou likewise." Just when the thought might suggest itself that Christianity was a mystical philosophy, it proves its truthfulness to the reality of life. And as through the Incarnation is the way to God, so through the law of human brotherhood are its footsteps seen. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"
- (c) It is the practical working of the gospel principle of good-will (eudokia) shed abroad in our hearts: the emanating from within us of the same principle which has taken possession of our life. And unless this principle be working in us, neither is the gospel, any more than the law, found in us to be a principle making for righteousness. For the gospel, when it is embraced, is a moving power, which fixes the intention of all our activities.

The Will

THIRTEENTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."—Rom. vii. 25

Picture: the struggle of the will described in Rom. vii.

Resolve: to examine the relation of my will to God.

I.—*God's gift of will to man.*

- (a) Man has certain powers of his moral nature, reason, will, and sensibility or feeling. Will is the power of self-determination, whereby one chooses ends or means. It provides the condition of our relation to God, the relation of loving and trustful dependence. Will co-operating with reason may delight in his service. "I delight to do thy will, O God."
- (b) Since our present measure of life is a probation, has a purpose, and leads to its fulfilment, the will has a fundamental task of determining its course. So our Lord sighed over Jerusalem just for this that they "would not." He would have gathered them together, but they did not will it. He will direct the will and strengthen it, but he will not coerce it.
- (c) It may be said in some measure that Almighty God even limits the exercise of his own will in order that he may respect ours. It is not in reality so, for he has given us will, and it is his will that man should fulfil his will by willing it. The will of Almighty God is infinitely grander than the exercise of unrestricted arbitrariness: it is holy and broad, and beyond our reach to search out to the end. Such is his respect for the will of man that although Christ died for all, we may lose our benefit in his death not only by not willing it, but by willing it too weakly.

II.—*The will as a matter of confession.*

- (a) Consider the difference between the state of man's will before and after the fall of man. Man's will has now a wrong bias. And this provides a proper subject for acts of confession to Almighty God. Evil is ever present; it is a past which is within me, and is present in an infection of nature, evidencing itself in the struggle of the will.
- (b) And will has been further weakened by personal consent to evil, and become partially distorted so that one may do the things one does not will, either by a partial paralysis of will or by a temporary volition which overmasters the permanent will. The will may even present the problem of a practical dualism. How often does one have to confess the same sins, and how often that one did not will strongly enough!
- (c) There are indeed many sins which do not arise directly from the will, but which belong to the infirmity of nature. But there is the possibility of a deliberateness of will's consent which is a spiritual apostasy from God, and deprives us of his grace. We cannot, indeed, confess a sin which we have not committed, but we may very fitly confess to God that it is only his grace which saves us from mortal sin.

III.—*The will's conflict to embrace grace.*

- (a) There is a common way of regarding sin which thinks only of acts and their comparative magnitude, and neglects the more important consideration of state. Worse than any act of sin is the state which does not will to have the grace of God, which is self-satisfied. The will, insufficient of itself for the great conflict, may by an act of self-determination accept or reject the grace whereby at each moment the conflict can be victorious.
- (b) Will's conflict with grace need not be one of opposition and strife, but may be through grace a blessed consent, a conflict of determined consent in the region of will's choice, raising its determination above the lower region of struggle. Turn my will toward thee, O Lord, and then give me grace to consent, and make thy grace efficacious within me! Take my will!
- (c) S. Paul has described for us the stages of will's conflict, until a great distrust of the will has led to its surrender into the hands of God, where alone is safety. Rom. vii. 15-24 presents the lower conflict. "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Something of that is the struggle to embrace grace. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" is the experience of grace in the higher conquests of the will surrendered to God. "Our wills are ours to make them thine."

• Christian Faint-heartedness

THIRTEENTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"These nations are more than I: how can I dispossess them?"—Deut. vii. 17.

Consider: the undertaking of the conquest of Canaan.

Pray: against faint-heartedness in daily life.

I.—*The situation.*

- (a) The Hebrews had passed through a long process of preparatory discipline, and now they had a brilliant promise of success. Almighty God had raised up a leader, one of the makers of the world's history in action and thought. He had brought his people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and great signs.
- (b) For more than a generation they had seen the signs and wonders in the wilderness, their own existence and cohesion being the most wonderful among them. They had already had the taste of conquest on the east, and had proved their mettle.
- (c) And now they were discouraged by the prospect of the west of the Jordan. It is another illustration of the faint-heartedness which they had always shown, but which was more excusable in earlier days. Before now they had seen that the Lord's arm was not waxed short. Truly their faint-heartedness amounted to disbelief.

II.—*Christian faint-heartedness*

- (a) Is due partly to looking at difficulties ahead. Of course the nations of the land are powerful; public opinion, society, the moral standard, temptations, persuasions, allurements. But attack them; are they so formidable as they look? The walls of some Jericho will fall down flat if properly besieged.
- (b) Partly due to forgetting Egypt and the wilderness (see vers. 18, 19). One is very apt to lose sight of one's past spiritual history. Surely "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Was it apart from him that you ever started? Why do you suppose that he has left you now? But perhaps born in the wilderness, you have not experienced the exodus. But who has nurtured you as a father beareth his son in all the way that ye went? (See Deut. i. 29-32.)
- (c) Partly due to thinking too exclusively of one's self. It makes one forget that "The Lord thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible" (ver. 21). Faint-heartedness is often the issue of defeat, when it has not had the effect of sending one back to God in penitence.

III.—*The divine view of the prospect.*

- (a) The conquest will be gradual (ver. 22). One is apt to think that gradual conquest is slow defeat; that the Almighty should conquer at one blow if he be the Almighty. And so one forgets the discipline of warfare, and that the true conquest is self-conquest and not the removal of obstacles.
- (b) "Lest the beasts of the land increase upon thee" (ver. 22). A sudden extermination would have landed Israel in a wild desert; they were not yet ready to cultivate the land and subdue it. Warfare is not all conflict, it is education. The life must grow; it is not as yet ready to reap all the fruits of victory, and they would be lost. Do not consider only the labour of fighting, but also what God is doing with you.
- (c) And the promise is assured, "Until they be destroyed" (ver. 23): "No man shall be able to stand before thee" (ver. 24). Faint-heartedness dare not attack, or can only attack impulsively and fall afterwards into the snare of making terms (vers. 25, 26). Almighty God purposes a protracted but always victorious conquest, during which he trains his people to take full possession of the land. "Thou shalt not be affrighted at them" (ver. 21).

The Struggle for a Life

THIRTEENTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."—Heb. xii. 1.

Picture: the conflict in the arena.

Resolve: to consider what more I ought to do in view of the gravity of life's issue.

I.—*The contest.*

- (a) The writer pictures the running race. It is more appropriate than the brutal conflicts of the amphitheatre. But he calls it a contest—"Let us run the contest"—for he would impress on his readers the strain and peril of it. Endurance (not patience) is the thought. "He that endureth to the end the same shall be saved." No test is more severe than that of endurance.
- (b) To endurance add detachment. Every weight which impedes progress: he is thinking probably of the encumbrances of society and business which would be likely to hinder a Christian convert (B.F.W.). And there is no obstacle so great as that ever present pressure of sin—all sin—which clings round us like an impeding garment.
- (c) Singleness of purpose must be added: "Looking off unto Jesus." Look away from what distracts, as well as put off what impedes. Hopefulness must not be damped by dwelling on the difficulty; but look with unswerving purpose unto Jesus throughout the whole race, as in crossing a narrow bridge one looks not at the foaming river below but at the firm ground on the other side.

II.—*Faith and shrinking back.*

- (a) The arena-conflict is accomplished on the principle of faith's venture: the contrast is made between those who shrink back, and those who believe (x. 39). There is the danger of shrinking back from the prospect of conflict, from loss of first energy, from weariness, if the looking unto Jesus be only a first impulse or an occasional practice.
- (b) But shrinking back suggests also a drawing in, as of furled sails. The race may be lost through this shrinking back upon one's self in isolation and spiritual reserve, through pride or absorption or selfishness. It may manifest itself in the tendency to watch one's self too closely, to think nothing of pressing forward unto progress but only of the negativeness of avoiding sins.
- (c) Faith is the opposite of all this; it is the going out from one's self. Opposed to shrinking, which is the inertia of life, is the venture of faith to dare and to do. It is the throwing of one's self upon God, and in him finding fellowship with one another. It is progressive and expansive.

III.—*The struggle for a life.*

- (a) The simile pictures the racing contest as won for the prize of life (x. 39). Shrinking back is the way of perdition, faith leads to the acquisition of life. St. Luke has the same symbolism: "In your patience (*i.e.* endurance) ye shall win your lives" (xxi. 19, R.V. marg.). It is a bold presentation of present existence. Not yet is my life my own: it has to be won; I must acquire the right to be trusted with it.
- (b) It is a grave view of life's probation. Rival powers struggle for myself, this very self which I look upon as mine. On one side there is help at hand, eager that I should by surrendering my life find it, and acquire it in the freedom of possession: on the other hand is temptation, luring me by sloth and timidity to lose all power over it, or to subjugate it at last into the slavery of another.
- (c) It is an illuminative view of the future. Heaven is freedom, acquired possession of life for unalloyed development. That reward must be won by each, and faith is the principle, for faith sees beyond the semblance of life, and interprets its circumstances as episodes in the contest-race. Faith embraces the coming forth of God into human life, and therein ventures all.

. A Broad Sympathy with Life

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"As he went to Jerusalem, . . . he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee."—S. Luke xvii. 11.

Picture: the scenes of this journey.

Pray: for a broader sympathy with life.

I.—*Passing through the midst of Galilee.*

- (a) Galilee has a long history, with its heroes in Barak, Deborah and Elisha. It had its sacred associations, Dan, Kadesh, Carmel, Ramah, Shunem. But it had lost its place; the neighbouring people had overrun it during and after the exile, and even up to the time of Herod it had been scarcely Jewish. Something of a picture of unbelieving England.
- (b) Yet now full of important towns: Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, Magdala, Tiberias, etc. Here hellenism flourished, and near at hand lay Decapolis which was Greek, while on the west were heathen Tyre and Sidon and all the Syro-Phœnician coast. Only materially did Galilee justify the promise of a land flowing with milk and honey. Through this modern society, with natural advantages, modern equipments and intellectual endowments he passes, attracted and ready to bestow his gifts.
- (c) These very disciples themselves were Galileans; but like pilgrims they pass along. Jesus Christ has ended his mission here in Capernaum. Nain, Nazareth, the sea-shore, Chorazin, etc. Many have been impressed; the disciples and a few devout women have followed him.

II.—*Passing through the midst of Samaria.*

- (a) Samaria is the heretical and schismatical world; with its mixed population, and its confusion of old religious associations and heathen interpretations and accretions, and a primitive revelation without the unfolding interpretation of history.
- (b) Its condition partly represents the lost opportunities of Judaism after the exile; a bolder faith, a wider outlook which could have learned from experience, might have made the age of restoration the spiritual salvation of Samaria. If the Jews suffered later from Samaritan opposition it was largely the punishment of their neglected opportunities.
- (c) Samaria too has its contribution like Galilee: there was much to be learned from it without becoming a Samaritan. Consider the records of the woman of Samaria, the good Samaritan, and this week's Gospel. For the typical relationship between the Jewish Church and the Samaritan chapel see S. Luke ix. 52-54.

III.—*"As he went to Jerusalem."*

- (a) The Christian bound on a definite journey has, by the will of God, to pass through these borders." Is it for his sake, or for theirs? The true answer must be, "For both." But he passes through the borders; he does not reside in either, and to the man of Galilee or Samaria he is often a *tertium quid*.
- (b) Jesus Christ did not neglect either; he had a large sphere of work by the lake of Galilee, a mission to Tyre and Sidon, and in the Greek cities of the eastern side of the lake. So too he had his short mission in Samaria, full of promise (S. John iv.). The apostolic command was Jerusalem, Judæa, Samaria: and it was obeyed (see Acts viii.).
- (c) Galilee and Samaria both had their contribution to the Church: its apostles came from the former, and made Jerusalem their home. Samaria widened their religious sympathies, and the success of their mission prepared them for the wider sphere. If the Church to-day could go boldly through the borders of Galilee and Samaria, it would the sooner stretch to the utmost parts of the world.

Afar off, or with Jesus

FOURTEENTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*Stood afar off.*"—S. Luke xvii. 12.

Picture: the group of disciples round Jesus, and the group of lepers afar off.

Resolve: to consider my place in these two groups.

I.—"*Afar off.*"

- (a) First, there are the leprous Christians, separated by deadly sin. We are so used to the scene that we almost forget that they are Christians, self-excommunicated. Pray for such that the miracle may be repeated. Consider Church life in a missionary diocese, where the discipline of ex-communication exists.
- (b) Not all who stand afar off are lepers. There are Christians whose love is growing cold. They draw near with their lips, while their hearts are afar off. A chill formality has taken possession of them; correct in their conduct, there is nevertheless an ossification of the heart. It is a terrible snare of priests, and religious.
- (c) Some stand aloof, as in their right place, yet look wistfully as desiring to be near. Perhaps the heart is Christian, but the mind cannot assent. Or once they were near, and long to be so again, but from lack of proper teaching do not know how to approach. The voice of Jesus has not said clearly to them, "Go, show yourselves unto the priests."

II.—*The companions of Jesus.*

- (a) As he moves through the world he is surrounded by a body of disciples, through whom normally he is approached. These disciples may desire to rebuke those who would approach him, and thus they become responsible for the aloofness of many who stand afar off. Unintentionally too the disciples have kept away many from their fellowship in Jesus Christ by their divisions and party spirit.
- (b) Not all who accompany him are true interpreters of his mind. Some there are who would reject the lepers, and are ready to repudiate those disciples who, following their Master, do not fear to eat with publicans and sinners. "Stand off, for I am holier than thou," was not the teaching of him whom we profess to follow.
- (c) Or while seeming to follow closely, the disciples may not be sharing in the conditions of fellowship—a readiness to forsake all, and a willingness to share his cross. Some are indeed far off, while thinking themselves close because they can just see his faint outline in the distance.

III.—*The ten lepers.*

- (a) But these lepers represent also a very encouraging consideration. At least they knew their state, which is more than can be said of the self-satisfied Christian. And knowing it, they were not ashamed to cry for mercy. What hope too in that they had satisfied themselves that Jesus was one who had the power to heal!
- (b) And they had the grace to obey in simplicity. No Naaman spirit was theirs, demanding the public miracle. The obvious reply, sending them to the priest who had authority to pronounce the cure of the leper, might have seemed to mock their petition; but they started to obey. Have we, who pity the lepers or maybe feel angered at their ingratitude, never cried over some sin-spot in our lives, and yet refused to hear the voice which bids us find the cure in the following of an obvious course of duty?
- (c) And, too, they were the first to speak, were it not that the very presence of Jesus had spoken eloquently. Do not be unmindful of living in a world in which Jesus thus moves. Priests and Christian workers must be very conscious that his presence is calling men. But does our hearing help his voice to be attractively heard?

Cleansed as they went

FOURTEENTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"As they went they were cleansed."—S. Luke xvii. 14.

Picture: the start of the ten towards the priests.

Resolve: to act upon one's prayers.

I.—*"As they went."*

- (a) We are not certain what the original cry for mercy involved. That the disease was regarded as incurable would not be a stumbling-block to them if they ventured upon a trial of this new worker of cures: they did not live in an age of scientific law. What appeals to us in these lepers is the grand response to the terrible strain put upon their faith by being sent off to the priests before they were cured.
- (b) He has said of those who pray, "Believe that ye have received" (S. Mark xi. 24, R.V.); and he acted on that principle. It is on that principle that we, too, have to act. It is difficult at times to hope for answer to prayer, when we can do nothing but wait; it is more difficult when we have to act upon prayers not yet seen to be answered.
- (c) Appreciate our Lord's sympathy with human frailty. He was always bountiful to those in whom we see only a mingling of emotion and superstition. Our wider knowledge of the reign of law makes some prayers impossible to us, which are quite honest to others; this, however, is not lack of faith, but wider knowledge. But learn from him to encourage simplicity in yourself rather than doubts and questionings, and do not despise others.

II.—*"Show yourselves to the priests."*

- (a) No one went to the priest unless he believed himself cured; no Jew supposed that the priest healed him, although Gentiles in their ignorance may have supposed that the priests professed to heal the disease. But the priest, experienced in the disease, examined into the case and pronounced upon it. Then he dealt spiritually with the case, prescribing the required offerings.
- (b) The priest was called of God to this office, and the Son of God honoureth his Father alway. As yet the Jewish priesthood stood, which dealt with leprosy typically; and he, who is ever the same, acted then as now he acts in his true priesthood.
- (c) In another case he revealed a purpose which might otherwise have lain hidden from us. It was for a testimony unto the priests (S. Matt. viii. 4). His obedience to the law, while yet he could heal the incurable disease, was a revelation to them, if they could but see it. To-day the priest, unless entirely mechanical, realizes the same testimony in his ministration of the sacraments.

III.—*The divine largeness of mind.*

- (a) One of the lepers was a Samaritan, and he sent them all to the priests. He did not imply thereby that the Samaritan priesthood was right (S. John iv. 22), but that the Samaritan ought to go to his own priest. Almighty God respects convictions, and distinguishes between causes and people.
- (b) We can see this divine condescension in the Old Testament, in many incidents, harmonious with the ideas of their age, which we are disposed to regard as unworthy of him. We should do better to learn something of his wide sympathy with the workings of the human mind. Conviction is not identical with exclusiveness; but it is nevertheless an essential condition of any profitable comprehensiveness.
- (c) The application of such thoughts is obvious, however difficult in detail. We seek after unity. Some would sacrifice anything in their impatience: orders and all sacraments may be let go. Others are afraid that they will compromise the truth, and so remain utterly misunderstood by the modern Samaritan, of whose mind they are likewise completely ignorant. There is a wideness of charity which is possible only to men of convictions, who can trust the truth.

Gratitude

FOURTEENTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine?*"—S. Luke xvii. 17.

Picture: the grateful Samaritan at the feet of Jesus.

Resolve: to make special acts of thanksgiving daily.

I.—*Consider the virtue of gratitude.*

- (a) Our conscience tells us that there is a peculiar barbarity about ingratitude. Even the animals can feel and express gratitude: for a man not to feel it on occasion proves gross perversion of character. And, feeling it, not to express it in thanks is wilful damaging of character. Christ permitted himself to express surprise at the ingratitude of the nine.
- (b) The main impediment to gratitude is pride of independence. A man does not like to feel under obligation: he desires to feel sufficient in himself. This is false; not independence but mutual love is the Christian's aim. This applies in spiritual matters as well as material; we should be willing to accept help from all sources.
- (c) Some *feel* gratitude, but cannot express it in thanks. This is to be deplored. When a man is true it should be natural to express what he feels. To act in such a manner as to give a false impression is hypocrisy. And so towards God as well as also towards man. If unaccustomed to express gratitude to him, we must train ourselves by continual acts of thanksgiving.

II.—*Consider that God delights to receive the expression of our gratitude.*

- (a) Gratitude to him is not so common as it should be. We take his gifts as a matter of course, and do not think of the giver. And often we fail in gratitude because we do not appreciate his favours, having little or no desire for spiritual gifts.
- (b) Men say "He ought to have said 'Thank you'; not that I want his thanks." But God does want, because he loves us. It is always unkind not to reciprocate advances of friendship: love is not so common in the world that it can be despised. But how gross the ingratitude not to reciprocate the advances of God's love to us, manifested in the bestowal of the gifts.
- (c) He delights in our gratitude also because it is the evidence of the character which he desires to see in us. For the practice of this virtue produces in us cheerfulness, contentment, humility, thoughtfulness for others. It is always so—it is an aspect of God's unity—that what he desires for himself in us is that which is also for our own good.

III.—*Peculiar reasons for cultivating the virtue of gratitude.*

- (a) To make reparation for the great ingratitude of the world, and for our own past ingratitude. It is one of the obligations of religion to make reparation to God for the insult of the world's neglect of him.
- (b) It develops a character of great importance to the priest and the religious—a lively sense of obligation to God, a freedom of speech with him, a sense of dependence on him and on one another. Gratitude is the foundation of charity. "We love because he first loved us."
- (c) While gratitude is a state of mind, thanksgiving is an act. By making acts of thanksgiving we cultivate the corresponding state of mind. The General Thanksgiving will give us all that we need by way of subjects—providence and grace. "That due sense of all thy mercies" (Gratitude) "and that we show forth thy praise . . . by giving up ourselves to thy service" (Thanksgiving).

This Stranger

FOURTEENTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*Save this stranger.*"—S. Luke xvii. 18.

Picture: Jesus and the Samaritan: the nine in the background.

Resolve: to make some act of real thanksgiving.

I.—*Unacknowledged gifts.*

- (a) Nine Jews were healed as they were on their way to the priests. Was it entirely obedience to his word and to the law which made them continue their journey? He marvelled at such complacency, and looked for an expression of gratitude which would go beyond the limits of conventional piety; but they accepted the gift of healing, and, without thinking of the benefactor, hastened on to get their legal discharge.
- (b) It will be surprising if even literally we have not at some time been in the company of those nine. Some earnest prayer for temporal blessing has been followed by a formal act of thanksgiving, while yet the sense of personal relief has entirely swallowed up any consciousness of deep gratitude to the heavenly donor. But in spiritual matters how often and how deeply we sin by ingratitude, simply from not realizing the vastness of the grace.
- (c) And so we are outdone by strangers. The one, whose life has been a denial of his baptism, opens his heart to the grace of God, and henceforth one impulse of loving devotion stirs his whole being: and *we* are shocked at his enthusiasm. How often, too, does the deep piety of dissenters put Churchmen to shame!

II.—*Save this stranger.*

- (a) S. Paul, the Jew, wrote of the Gentiles as "Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." There seems to us almost a touch of exaggeration in his language, because we are apt to minimize the loss of the gentile world in our knowledge of its equal privileges in the gospel. But the Master knew the spiritual value of Jewish life and training, and marvelled that the Samaritan put the nine Jews to shame.
- (b) To-day we Gentile Christians have become recipients of the covenant, and still the world has its alien Samaritans and Gentiles. Are we concerned about them? Take heed lest we be surpassed by them. Christianity is making strides in new countries: will the day come when Europe and the British Isles become like the Churches of Alexandria, North Africa, Ephesus, while Japan, India, and China are the foremost in giving thanks to God?
- (c) Now the nine made themselves strangers, and this one stranger made himself fellow-citizen by returning to give thanks. The privileges of Churchmen are beyond count, in the grace of the sacraments, the benefits of formal worship, ordered life and sound teaching. But where are the evidences of these benefits of the covenant? Why are Churchmen so cold?

III.—*The double surprise.*

- (a) Where are the nine? Reflect upon this surprise of Jesus Christ, who knew what was in man. See in it both what he expects and what he desires. Be shamed by the return of the Samaritan into opening the heart to him with more warmth and appreciation of his countless mercies. Are we spoiled by his goodness to us? We cry out for "Catholic privileges": are we indifferent to himself?
- (b) His surprise at the Samaritan. He had sent them to the priests, the Jews to theirs, and the Samaritan to his. Oh! the large-heartedness of Jesus Christ! Prejudice and race-hatred might have excused the Samaritan if he had been the one not to return: but in him the Good Samaritan found one like-minded with himself.
- (c) His own self-abandonment in love and service must make ingratitude most unintelligible to him. Let us resolve to please him by coming back always to give thanks, and to give them from the heart.

Appreciating the Forgiveness of Sins

FOURTEENTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."—S. Luke xxiii. 43.

Picture: the three crosses.

Resolve: greater appreciation of the forgiveness of sins.

I.—*The penitent robber.*

- (a) He is being crucified for the world: he has prayed for the many. But Jesus Christ is individual in his dealings. He takes us one by one and brings us into the larger life of fellowship; and he maintains the fellowship of the Church by still dealing with us individually. Learn to value his personal dealings by regarding his individual work upon the cross.
- (c) It was the last moment. What had this dying robber to offer in way of reparation, in prospect of future usefulness? What but a wasted life with squandered gifts. The divine Son saw in him a son, one for whom he died, one created in the love of God. Do not limit the divine forgiveness.
- (c) The fulness of forgiveness. He was to be that day with Jesus in paradise. He was passing into hades, and with him should go the firstfruits of his passion: triumphantly he would lead him through the domain of death and deliver him from the power of Satan. Whatever awaited him in the restoration of his life would be the outcome of that companionship with Jesus, which henceforth could never desert him.

II.—*The horror of sin.*

- (a) This man was once a child; there was in him the possibility of a disciple, of being one of the twelve. He had had a mother who loved him; was she at the cross, like another mother, to hear these words? He had been taught in school and synagogue and had learned psalms and prayers. Oh! pray for the mothers of bad sons!
- (b) And now: what was the history of his being led astray? What hidden beginnings of carelessness and wilfulness, perverting the mind, perhaps distorting the intellect, certainly weakening the will! What stages of going deeper into sin! And now it led to this. And yet Jesus Christ had pursued that soul to the very grave of death.
- (c) What lost opportunity of life! Jesus Christ had been preaching and teaching and doing miracles here, and all the while this man was going deeper into evil courses. Had he perhaps ever seen and heard him? He knew at any rate that he had done nothing amiss; was he won by the first prayer on the cross, or did some word of Jesus overheard a year ago come back into his mind?

III.—*The divine charity.*

- (a) It was a meagre repentance. He acknowledged that he deserved his fate; he would not hear God blasphemed at the moment of his death. He did not even pray to be forgiven. But he turned to Jesus Christ. How often do we, conscious of the meagreness of our repentance, pray with hesitation for forgiveness, more to relieve our feelings than with any strong conviction that the prayer is heard. It is the sacramental confession which deepens penitence, and which strengthens faith by the assurance of Christ's word.
- (b) It was an ignorant repentance. We do not even know what he meant by that petition. It is only the word of forgiveness that satisfies us that it was other than a contemptuous and pitying taunt at a deluded fanatic. And at its highest it was a prayer to a Jewish Messiah and not to the Son of Man. But he accepted with royal bounty. Divine charity does not weigh repentance in nicely balanced scales and adjudicate.
- (c) The forgiveness is worthy of God. It was full and generous. It opened the doors immediately for his entrance into full and everlasting fellowship. There is no forgiveness which does not bring union with God in Jesus Christ. And forgiveness is always immediate. Go from your absolution with heart lightened and faith confirmed.

Examination

FOURTEENTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*Examine me, O Lord.*"—Ps. xxvi. 2. "*Examine yourselves.*"—2 Cor. xiii. 5.

Picture: my facility in examining the conduct of others.

Resolve: some point arising out of the meditation.

I.—*The divine examination.*

- (a) We are constantly, and very unwisely, examining, that is, criticizing, others. We see that life tests them, and, unqualified as we are, we pass mental judgment upon motives and character. We are conscious, when we think of it, that others do the same with us. But consider that day after day Almighty God is examining us, searchingly and without error, in the same way.
- (b) He examines by life. The daily events are the examination questions, which we answer well or badly. There is that person with whom you are out of touch, because you are wrapped up in self, or because he had hurt your pride. There is an opportunity to do good, and you did not even see what the examination question was. We prepare ourselves for an examination before a board, and try to do our best at it. We do not think much of his examination.
- (c) Then let your own examination be made in full view of his daily examinations. To-day, or this week, he has given me so many questions, some easy and some very hard. I know that I answered some badly, others indifferently, and some I did not even understand. Some, indeed, I did not see, for I did not even know what he had to do with some portions of my day.

II.—*Self-examination.*

- (a) It is the most elementary part of an examination to ask: "What have I done wrong to-day?" A Christian is not supposed to be always doing something wrong. Yet it is a gravely important preliminary question; for if the Christian have done something definitely wrong, he must definitely repent of it, confess it, and put it away.
- (b) A large part of a superficial examination extending over a week or two is often occupied with trifling omissions of duty, as though we had been thoroughly faithful otherwise. There is something rather Jewish about this. It is right that even small duties should be faithfully discharged, but are these failures the whole of what God finds when he examines? Is my duty to God made up of a certain set of obligations?
- (c) Self-examination also often fails because it does not see behind the manifested act. Ask, *why* did I omit these duties? *Why* did this circumstance prove a temptation to me? Can I not connect these varied items, and find a radical explanation within my heart? Pride? Self-will? etc.

III.—*Examine me, O God.*

- (a) First, call Almighty God in to conduct the examination; put life for the last week into his sight. Pray, make acts of contrition, wait for his voice in conscience. It is not merely common honesty that is wanted, but spiritual illumination.
- (b) Then examine the purpose of life. Has it been maintained? Has it been applied in detail? Do not look merely at sins; but give attention to such duties as faithful use of time, acts of unselfishness and mortification, right use of opportunity. In God's light see what you had not seen at the time.
- (c) Then examine your life as a disciple of Christ and a child of God. The secret springs of prayer; has there been growth there, in depth, in faith, in unselfishness, in conformity to the will of God? Has his presence been realized? And this too; I am a sinner redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Has that been my relation godwards? Have I learnt more of the deep joy of forgiveness? Or again, have I progressed in trust, learning the restfulness of leaning upon God?

Be not Anxious

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Take no thought for the morrow."—S. Matt. vi. 34.

Picture: the fowls of the air.

Resolve: more determined thought of God's providence.

I.—*The divine providence.*

- (a) Consider it always at work, in varied ways, physical, intellectual, social, political. Consider it also as acting deliberately. We do not think sufficiently of Almighty God's personal activity; but, because he is a God of order, we are tempted to think that his orderliness limits him.
- (b) The divine providence is beneficent towards all; with him is neither favouritism nor spitefulness. The good God manifests himself as the universal Father, with equal and loving care for *all* his children. And for each one; for throughout his teaching the Son of Man impresses upon us the individual care of the Father. "One of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."
- (c) It is not surprising that this lesson of the divine providence overbalancing the anxiety of human life impressed itself upon the apostolic Church. "Casting all your anxiety upon him, for he careth for you" (1 S. Pet. v. 7); "In nothing be anxious" (Phil. iv. 6). The conditions of the Christians made it a very blessed truth to them.

II.—*"Be not therefore anxious."*

- (a) While we believe in the providential care and personal interest of God in us, we are often distracted by anxiety. Consider, therefore, that in mercy he has hidden the future from us. Why try to go behind him? Many things which in anticipation make us anxious, turn out more happily than we expected. Then indeed may we say, "Why did I not trust him?"
- (b) But not always will the divine providence act thus. Difficulties and trials await us in the discipline of life. But why anticipate them? Sufficient will be the burden in its own day. Consider whether the anxiety which anticipates them is not in some degree due to our reluctance to accept evil at his hand, although ordained for our good.

"Father, I know that all my life
Is portioned out for me,
And the changes which are sure to come
I do not fear to see."
- (c) There is no Christian more anxious than the one who cannot forget God, and yet does not serve him wholeheartedly. Distraction of mind produces anxiety. Such an one is trying to serve two masters. He who seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness is on the way to the Christian life without distraction. (See Phil. iv. 19.)

III.—*"The morrow."*

- (a) Consider the present character of life. We must live day by day, and cannot add one cubit to our age. Sufficient for the day is its responsibility; sufficient too must be its grace. To be standing by his grace to-day and under his providential care is the best preparation for to-morrow.
- (b) The illustration gives sufficient reply to any abuse of the words. The birds are not improvident; yet with their forethought is a lightness of heart in present joy, such as Jesus Christ would have of all Christians, whose life under the divine care is to be met by the response of a thankful and cheerful disposition.
- (c) Anxiety is a distraction in present duty, and gives warning of a mind centred rather on self than on the performance of the will of God. If the mind be concentrated on the present duty it has little leisure for such foreboding.

"I ask thee for a present mind,
Intent on pleasing thee."

The Stigmata of Jesus

FIFTEENTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"For I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.—Gal. vi. 17.

Picture: S. Francis and the stigmata.

Pray: for the spirit of devotion.

I.—Consider the words in some simple applications.

- (a) S. Paul's case. He had been persecuted in the cities of Galatia (see 2 Tim. iii. 11). Here was a man who commended his faith by being ready to suffer for it. Can we even take a slap in the face for it, or a sneer?
- (b) The Galatian contrast. They were all for circumcision, not persecution. S. Paul too was circumcised, but his boast was in these other marks, these proofs of Christian service. Pray for the real marks of the Christian, in self-control and discipline, strengthened character which is able to resist and stand fast. Pray not to be carried away by trifles, externals, badges.
- (c) In the eyes of the world a stigma attaches to the Christian: it is the stigma of the Lord Jesus. It is not for us to try to serve two masters, but, having the mark of the cross upon us, to make it the symbol of our life. And why do we ever keep on crossing ourselves if we do not wish to find the cross in our lives?

II.—Two great lines of interpretation, which interlace—devotion and faithfulness. Devotion.

- (a) The word "*Marks*" is literally *stigmata*. We all know the stigmata of S. Francis—the five wounds of our Lord's Passion impressed on his body. Strive to learn something of his devotion to the Passion. And first as the Christian's place of refuge. "Just as I am without one plea," etc. Dwell again and again on this until you grasp it. Forgiven, go to be forgiven, for very love of hearing it once more.
- (b) Learn in his Passion to hate sin, and not merely to avoid it for your own sake. See how it drives the nails into his hands and feet. After examination of conscience go to your crucifix and drive the sins in there. Face them there in his stigmata.
- (c) Loving the cross seek to embrace it. Pray to be conformed to it. Make it your model. Learn there how to live. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." But each in its own order. First learn to grasp forgiveness, then to hate sin for his sake, then to have fellowship with him in the stigmata.

III.—Faithfulness.

- (a) S. Paul based his power to resist allurements on the fact of what he had suffered. From henceforth no use for man to try to shake me, *for I bear in my body, etc.* A deep spirit of devotion to the cross is the surest guarantee of faithfulness. Men rarely desert a master for whom they have suffered the loss of all things. They are too deeply committed to withdraw.
- (b) But there is a problem in faithfulness. "Neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision." And yet, "They constrain you to be circumcised only lest they should suffer persecution." How shall we distinguish faithfulness to principle from self-will in non-essentials? A passion to embrace the stigmata of Christ will purge the soul from self-will.
- (c) But how shall we be faithful against opposition, and how shall we ever learn to embrace the cross? By a prior faithfulness in the inner man to the normal grace of God. The gift of God is a sacred trust to be guarded and cherished in the faithfulness of conformity to grace.

The History of Christ in Me

FIFTEENTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect. . . . Brethren I count not myself to have apprehended."—Phil. iii. 12, 13.

Picture: S. Paul talking of his experiences to a group of young and admiring disciples.

Resolve: to examine the history of Christ in me.

I.—*Mark his healthy-mindedness.*

- (a) As he manifests a forgetfulness of what might hinder, and a remembrance of what is stimulative, so too he can of determination examine his inner life without morbidness. While admiring disciples no doubt thought him all but perfect, his own estimate was that in him dwelt no good thing.
- (b) This estimate was not due to an exaggerated view of his pre-Christian life; for he held the balance between throwing it off, as though it had never been, and the temptation to ignore conscientiousness. He knew that he needed the mercy, although he had acted in ignorance; he recognized that the past lives into the present; but he magnified the mercy (1 Tim. i. 13-15).
- (c) The key to this healthy-mindedness was that he did not ignore his Christian experience. Apprehended by Christ, he could not neglect that revolutionary fact when he looked within. He examined his heart and found Christ there: in that light he could see more fully, and without disqualifying himself for pushing on he could see his own self with increasing adequacy.

II.—*Lessons from a Pauline examination.*

- (a) He did not confound forgiveness with the end of salvation. He says that he did not already attain at the moment of his great apprehension by Christ. No one has realized more strongly than he the mighty grasp of Christ; yet many another has been lifted up by pride, until conversion has become a spiritual disease.
- (b) Nor had he any doctrine of final perseverance. Taken hold of by Christ, he pressed on if so be he might apprehend. Elsewhere he expresses a fear lest he should be rejected (1 Cor. ix. 24-27). One can escape from the grasp of Christ, either by under-regarding the great fact of it, or by abusing it instead of finding it the one impelling power of pressing forward in his strength.
- (c) To examine self and find Christ there, holding on in spite of human waywardness and feebleness is a great matter; but, yet further, examine Christ within you, so that you may apprehend that for which you were apprehended by him. Christ's purpose for S. Paul was his progress unto perfection; and in his increasing knowledge of the divine holiness he knew that he was not already made perfect.

III.—*Dangers of an examination.*

- (a) Some examinations feed self-satisfaction and so do not aid progress: a certain sense of success in Christian work, consciousness of a few ugly sins overcome, and the like. It has been an examination without Christ. He has not been called in to conduct it and to probe, nor has he been found within as the sole origin of what has caused self-complacency, nor has he been recognized as the apprehender for a mighty purpose.
- (b) A danger to serious minds is an introspective habit, and the growth of scrupulosity; one is so often looking within that one has no time to be getting on, doubts indeed whether one ought to go on. Cognisant of this danger some have doubted the usefulness of self-examination; but the error was not in the examination, but in the omission to examine the history of Christ within and one's use of his grace. S. Paul found that "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me."
- (c) An examination is to lead to definiteness of Christian aim. But there is a danger lest this definiteness of purpose may result in a tendency to neglect other matters: I may correct one sin or two sins, and leave the root of sin untouched, or cultivate one grace at the expense of another. The definiteness must be within the Christ-apprehended life, a study of what Christ is able to do in me.

Apprehended of Christ Jesus

FIFTEENTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*I was apprehended by Christ Jesus.*" "*One thing I do.*"—Phil. iii. 12, 13 (R.V.).

Picture: S. Paul arrested on the way to Damascus.

Pray: for a clearer perception of the Christian's relation to his Lord.

I.—*The fact of his apprehension.*

- (a) In the strength of his early manhood he was serving God with all his powers: but he had not reached the centre of true religion, his service was distorted by a self-satisfied temper; and if not self-satisfied, it was only because in his spiritual pride he thought himself capable of indefinitely further attainment. But he did not know himself as a chosen vessel, still less as God's slave.
- (b) But his conversion was not a choice: the fact that he could have resisted did not mean to him that on the road to Damascus he chose Christ; "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." He was chosen, grasped and delivered; that was the great fact; henceforth he was the slave; willing indeed and grateful and devoted, but not his own; one had apprehended him and taken him as his.
- (c) So strongly was he persuaded of this fact that his life was henceforth stamped by it; independence had gone, and instead of it was, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" One strong purpose possessed him, in that grasp to pursue the intention of it; a purpose only possible because of the grasp.

II.—*The power of this life.*

- (a) The life which is seized, dominated, is always stronger than the life which chooses; the poet, the electrician, etc., who greatly excels, is always the one who *must* be what he is; the subject masters him, and he obeys with reverence. To choose implies a divided mind; to have to do so is the concentration of single purpose.
- (b) The highest application of this principle is in Christianity. Duty is one side of it only, but a very strong side and one lamentably neglected in the religion of feelings. Duty is the less stimulating aspect of apprehension, and requires the companion aspect of power. "I must, because for this I was apprehended" needs "I can, because I am apprehended." Infant baptism is the most emphatic expression of this truth.
- (c) Whatever difficulty may be felt in the realization of this, it is nevertheless the expression of the Christian truth of grace. If I go up to God and offer myself to him, I am dealing bountifully with God; at least I am the author of my own salvation. But if God come to me and take me, then I can but fear lest by the assertion of myself I thwart him.

III.—*Secrets of this life of power.*

- (a) It has the strength of purpose. Much life is dissipated through indefiniteness of aim, and is lost in emotions, and in trying to be Christian; the life which realizes itself in the grasp of God has the propelling power of divine grace, which guides it; and to him it turns for the supply of all its needs. It is apprehended for a purpose, beyond its own immediate power of perception; to him it turns for its unfolding interpretation.
- (b) It has the spirit of hopefulness, which is the present anticipation of a looked-for future; and hope is always a power. S. Paul (Rom. v. 1-5, R.V.) has laid down as the first two realizations of the life of acceptance a consciousness of being at peace with God and a rejoicing in hope. The past and the future join in the present experience of the one life which began for us in forgiveness and unfolds itself progressively into the future in the glory of God.
- (c) With S. Paul there is no distinction between a state of forgiveness and the presence of the indwelling Christ. The appreciation of these is often a very distinct experience with Christians, and this latter is the deepest secret of the life which realizes itself as having been apprehended.

A Christian's Review

FIFTEENTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Forgetting those things which are behind."—Phil. iii. 13.

Picture : the runner in the race.

Resolve : a practical resolution based on the meditation.

I.—*The simile applied to S. Paul.*

- (a) The runner would be impeded by looking back, whether to contemplate his progress, or in anxiety lest a competitor were gaining on him. If he is to do his very best he must not even think of anything but of the one business of making for the goal. The simile is meant to suggest strenuous purpose, single undivided aim.
- (b) S. Paul might have looked back on his Christian course with complacency. His life since conversion had been marked by rapid progress, great labours, many sufferings for Christ; he had risen to the highest rank, had fought and won battles; now in Rome the eyes of the Christian world were upon him.
- (c) Or he might have delayed his course not through self-complacency but through despondency, recalling his pre-Christian life of persecution, and especially the death of Stephen. Many a one in his place would have argued that he was fit for nothing but the lowest place: S. Paul indeed would have confidently admitted this of himself, but his fitness was beside the mark, seeing that he had been apprehended.

II.—*S. Paul's interpretation of "forgetting."*

- (a) There is an abuse of the phrase which is agreeable to the superficial; it is easy for some to forget the past, and to think complacently upon the change. S. Paul could have boasted of a unique conversion, of manifold grace, of visions and miracles, and have ignored his previous history or only have remembered it to feed self-satisfaction by heightening a contrast.
- (b) But although he here speaks of forgetting, he elsewhere recalls: he was not fit to be an apostle; he was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, injurious; in old age he wrote of himself as chief of sinners. In the simile of the running match to forget the past was essential to progress; when the apostle recalls his past it is to the same end that it may aid his progress by keeping him humble and reminding him of the mercy of God.
- (c) On each of these occasions he recalls that he was apprehended by Christ. Once he has just said that he was seen of Christ (1 Cor. xv. 8, 9): at another time he adds, "But I obtained mercy" (1 Tim. i. 13), and on the third occasion he has preceded his words by, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15). And when he calls himself "less than the least of all saints"—and means it—he writes that his present condition is due to the effectual working of the power of grace (Eph. iii. 7, 8).

III.—*True principles of a Christian review.*

- (a) It is a practice recommended to Christians quite irrespective of one's daily examination. Such a review may fitly be made in retreat; it will generally extend over a year; at some crises a life's review may be advisable. This meditation should provide useful suggestions thereon, as well as wise counsel against the profitlessness of brooding.
- (b) A review is to aid progress, and herein first by being humbling. A year's review will be enough to check self-satisfaction; a life's review will humble to the dust. Further, it is to aid progress by deepening the consciousness of sin; with each year's progress in grace the past should seem darker: yet in the sight of God it was far darker, when he forgave it, than it even now is seen by me to be.
- (c) But this chiefly, that a review primarily is to be a review of God's mercy to me. Me, such as I was, such as I am to-day, apart from the divine forgiveness, Christ took hold of, has held to in spite of myself. What a miracle of divine perseverance! If I learn from my review to trust myself less, I learn to trust him a thousand-fold more for his faithfulness.

Heaven a Desire

FIFTEENTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—Phil. iii. 13, 14 (R.V.).

Picture: the runner's eagerness: the goal, the prize.

Resolve: to think more often of heaven.

I.—*The consideration of the simile.*

- (a) The simile suggests singleness of purpose, keenness and great energy. Elsewhere it is yet more forcibly developed (1 Cor. ix. 24 ff.). A humiliating consideration that our religion is often nearly devoid of these characteristics of strenuousness, which mark our temporal activities.
- (b) The purpose is fixed beyond distraction by being riveted on the goal. Cp. the running simile in Hebrews xii. 1, 2. The way to practise detachment is by development of a stronger attachment. "Where the treasure is there will the heart be also." Where there is that attachment he can also be temperate in all things, and lay aside impediments which beset his path.
- (c) There is a false superiority which would be above the desire of heaven. The runner is not base for desiring the prize, although in his case it may be trumpery; he desires it because it represents success. The Christian desires heaven because it is to him the unbroken fellowship of God, the attainment of holiness, etc., and too because it is the purpose for which he has been grasped by God.

II.—*The consideration of heaven.*

- (a) It is a much-needed warning. The world is very near to us and if heaven be not yet nearer we may lose it by too little desire. The Christian knows that heaven is no arbitrary reward; it is the land to be attained by conquest. The more he regards it, the more is he stirred up to this "One thing" (Phil. iii. 13, R.V.). The more he regards its character the more surely he forsakes himself and leans upon him through whom alone he can enter in.
- (b) It is a great encouragement. There is much within and without to discourage, and depression is the ruin of Christian lives. The soldier fighting against self and the world's evil will not be undaunted unless he realize that for this attainment he was made a Christian, and that in Christ it is his assured goal.
- (c) It is a great education through appreciation. A mischievous cynicism has made heavenly-mindedness synonymous with the unpractical: but heaven can be no side issue to the Christian, and its contemplation gives tone and character. The opposite to heavenly-mindedness is earthly-mindedness.

III.—*Ideas of heaven.*

- (a) Seeing that the rewards and joys of heaven are purely spiritual, one need not fear desiring them; the cultivation of the desire is the Christian education. So the desire of heaven is not the unpractical dreaminess of living in a fancy future, but is the making present of the developing future. "The kingdom of heaven is within you." Unlike most ancient religions, our religion is of the future, but a future which is already begun; the heir is already an inheritor of a possession which is progressive and expansive.
- (b) The descriptions of heaven are largely literary and conventional: Christian experience interprets them. No language can express the union of those in God, who see him and are being conformed to his likeness. Some will laugh at harps, and streets of gold and white robes; the true Christian is lifted out of himself by the harmony of all things in God, the beauty of proved gold, the longed-for purity of the robe of righteousness.
- (c) Heaven is not the idea which can never be true: it is the one real and abiding fact, towards which all imperfection is struggling, the realized perfection of the will of God for creation. From God to God through God is the creed of the Christian.

Angels and Men glory in the Cross

FIFTEENTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."—Gal. vi. 14.

Picture: angels and men round the throne in heaven saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain" (Apoc. v. 11, 12).

Resolve: To prepare myself more carefully for this worship of heaven by practising it now.

I.—Men and angels.

- (a) Both worship him for this revelation of divine love. The angels know the love of God because they live in the light of it: they rejoice that we are led through the cross to share in their knowledge of his love. Think how glad we are when one whom we revere has enabled others to appreciate what we already knew to be admirable in him.
- (b) Both worship him for this revelation of divine wisdom (see 1 Cor. i. 23, 24), manifesting the unity of God by harmonizing what by us men is appreciated under a variety of attributes—righteousness, mercy, anger. Wisdom is indeed justified by her children in the history of the cross. If the purer intelligence of the angels sees further into this than we, yet we too glory in it and say, "Thou hast done all things well."
- (c) Both worship him for this revelation of divine power. The angels see the power of God sustaining the world, and they can trace out the power of the cross in subduing the hearts of men and training them to holiness. Through the power of the cross in our lives we share with them this knowledge.

II.—Angels.

Some of the glory of the cross is seen by the angels in a manner which passes our present experience.

- (a) In the person of Jesus Christ ascended they already see the victory of the cross, for in him redeemed humanity is seen to be triumphant. We can rarely raise ourselves to the height of S. Paul's timeless acrost, "Whom he justified them he also glorified" (Rom. viii. 30), but with the angels it is the normal experience. While we see rather the redeeming power they behold the glory of the cross.
- (b) They share the divine joy. He "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross" (Heb. xii. 2): and there is joy in heaven when the cross works any of its miracles upon the heart of man (S. Luke xv. 7, 10). The angels do not rejoice the less over the one that is found, because their highest joy is with him who has recovered his own.
- (c) They are able to glory more fully than we in the daily renewed victories of the cross. They see the increasing triumph procession of Christ: we too often fix our eyes on the failures and observe almost a meagreness of fruitful results.

III.—Men.

There are some aspects of the glory of the cross into which men can enter more deeply than the angels.

- (a) The holy angels have never known forgiveness, which to us is never dissociated from the love of the cross. To have contributed to its shame without the merit of contributing to its glory, and yet to enhance its glory by our demerited forgiveness, this is the mysterious experience which only those who are fallen can know. We can say, "For our sakes."
- (b) Nor can the angels appreciate as we do the revelation of the cross in life, "whereby the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." If they follow its working power on the hearts of men, it is for us to know its interior efficacy. The mortified life is the life of freedom, and it is freedom after bondage.
- (c) And we alone can say, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." The angels share in the fellowship of heaven, and minister to the heirs of salvation in that capacity: it is ours to share in the fellowship of the Passion and enter into the joy of our Lord's sufferings.

The Church and Christ's Life

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Able to comprehend."—Eph. iii. 18.

Consider: the Church life of a parish.

Resolve: greater generosity of prayer for my parish.

I.—For the Church.

- (a) This epistle treats of the deep things to a Church already beginning to grow a little stale and complacent. It is the epistle needed by the Church to-day, rousing itself to the activity of service, but without spiritual depth to comprehend. The service of man is not the whole life of the Church, and the Christian service of man must spring out of the dwelling of Christ in the heart, whereby we are rooted and grounded in that love which is the mainspring of abiding service.
- (b) Think about one's own need to comprehend; realize one's own spiritual deficiencies and superficialities. Then one will know something of what to pray for on behalf of the Church. Indeed, here will be a double advantage, for one will no longer pray mere words of high-sounding merit, but will pray with the understanding and with the will also; and while one prays for the Church one will be correcting one's own life at the same time; and this must help to make good prayers.
- (c) For one cannot comprehend in the shallows of self, whether it be of self-pleasing or complacency or self-absorption. To comprehend one must be in the depths of experience and venture, entering into the mind of God. And if we would do this, we should pray very differently about the Church.

II.—Conditions.

- (a) S. Paul gives a condition of being able to comprehend. It is that we be "rooted and grounded." There is no doubt that the Church is in Christ; but it does not follow that each member is rooted and grounded in this indwelling. Mark the symbolism, and consider what is involved in it. It is that of the vine and the temple; and the ideas are those of life and stability (Bp. Westcott).
- (b) This gives some idea of spiritual comprehension. Not an intimacy with philosophical or dogmatic theology, but a strengthening of the foundation of spiritual life, "in Christ," who will cleanse and defend. So S. Paul prays that his readers may be *strong* enough to comprehend, rather than "able." The comprehension really follows from the rooting and grounding.
- (c) And this is not an isolated experience. It is to be "in love," whether we read the words with, "That Christ may dwell through faith in your hearts," or with, "Being rooted and grounded." And the Gentiles are again reminded of this fellowship in the words, "With all saints." It is not merely that it is only the Church collectively which can truly apprehend the love of Christ, but that no Christian can apprehend him in isolation.

III.—Spiritual comprehension and the Church.

- (a) A great deal, therefore, of this strength to apprehend the love of Christ, which after all is beyond exhaustion, will depend upon our spiritual relation to the Church as the sphere of Christ's victory. Study the Church sympathetically with this end in view; give much attention to the other lives which are rooted and grounded; do not be content to be an isolated individual, but behave as a member of a congregation of brethren in Christ.
- (b) For to God the Father is glory in the Church through Christ. And I must enter through this Church life of Jesus Christ into the mind of God, sharing in the joy of his glory in lives which are preserved by his help and goodness. Let intercession for the Church be made practical by prayer for the parish in its varied conditions, social and spiritual; and with plenty of thanksgiving.
- (c) And thus shall I learn better to pray aright for the Church, as I realize it to be Christ's life in my neighbourhood, and the sphere of God's glory. God's way of cleansing and defending is often very different from mine; but if I enter into his mind I shall be made stronger to comprehend, and more capable to pray aright.

The Place of Sympathy

SIXTEENTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Weep not."—S. Luke vii. 13.

Picture: the scene.

Resolve: to cultivate the grace of sympathy by the study of Jesus Christ.

I.—*The compassion of Jesus.*

- (a) Mark its true humanity. With him there can be no ignorance of such conditions, until brought under notice, as call forth the power of sympathy; yet only now was he moved, when he observed the case as we should observe it and be moved by it. The compassion was wholly human, human at its best. There is nothing in the mystery of his person which limits the full expression of humanity.
- (b) Its restraint is evidenced by the same consideration, and the same is seen in the death of Lazarus. He was not ashamed of his feelings, but though heart never beat like his, he was not moved unless a case of distress was brought under his notice; then he did not check the expression of his emotion by any consciousness of the relief about to be given. It was the true beating of heart in touch with the grief of another.
- (c) Like us, too, the Son of Man was moved by a mother's sorrow. Consider the reality of his filial experience, and the sacredness of such relationship for us. There are few things in life more hallowing to a man than the reverence of motherhood as realized through his devotion to his own mother.

II.—*The reasonableness of Christianity.*

- (a) "Weep not." The sympathy which can remove the cause of weeping says so. It is not the sentiment which cannot bear to see sorrow, or the superficiality which would say the correct thing without feeling it, or the false interpretation of life which would despise the feelings. The words and the action which followed were the true expression of "Weep with them that weep."
- (b) "That ye sorrow not, even as the rest, which have no hope" (1 Thess. iv. 13, R.V.). So wrote the apostle, interpreting his Master. It was the recognition of the true place of sorrow's expression, with the due limit of Christian hope. Place is found for the expression of sorrow, and then the healing of Christian hope is its relief. Christians may sorrow, but not without the consolation of the gospel of the resurrection. It is false to allow no room for sorrow because of the revelation of Christ.
- (c) "Jesus wept." It is not recorded that he wept at the death of Lazarus, nor on seeing Martha and Mary; but apparently he wept at last by reason of the accumulated strain of the whole scene. Weep not—Jesus wept, interpret one another. While he healed many, it is only three times recorded that he raised the dead—an only daughter, a little girl—a widow's only son—the only brother of two sisters who were all his close friends. In each case the human heart was strongly moved.

III.—*The place of sympathy.*

- (a) The absence of sympathy can only mean hardness or selfishness. And if the feeling of sympathy is there it should find true expression, and not be thwarted through self-consciousness nor encouraged from mere self-indulgence. Effort ought to be made to overcome the difficulty of showing one's sympathy naturally, nor ought one to be hardened by the difficulty which some manifest in receiving and valuing sympathy.
- (b) Sympathy is to be distinguished from good manners, and when it is genuine it will not be offended by rejection. It should develop with the extending appreciation of our fellowship one with another, and in Christ, thereby bringing to human sympathy the healing power and Christian tone of the great revelation of human life.
- (c) It may be very necessary to train one's self in sympathy: the true grace will grow by exercise. And it is also to be trained in sensitiveness and restraint. Much alloy mixes itself with the expression of sympathy as well as with its feeling. The true growth must be through the increasing study and appreciation of the character of sympathy in its strength and tenderness as seen in him who is the Son of Man.

The Responsibility of Revelation

SIXTEENTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."—Eph. iii. 19.

Consider : angels contemplating the crucifixion.

Pray : for grace to respond aright to revelation.

I.—*The angelic knowledge of Christ's love.*

- (a) In contrast with our knowledge of the love of Christ which has been provoked by his redemptive Incarnation, the angels have been appreciative recipients of his love since they were created through him, responding by worship and loving service. Sustained too by him who upholds all creation, they are never unmindful of their relation to him. In their perfect service they find unbroken joy, and their life is a continual response of gratitude to him who has brought them into such a blissful existence.
- (b) And in the creation of this universe they have further experience of his love extending itself to creatures inferior to themselves, even—marvellous to conceive!—to creatures irresponsible to his love, and whose misconduct has caused him to reveal the willingness to suffer which is inherent in love.
- (c) And now has been revealed to them the height and depth of that love, which indeed passes comprehension. And still their knowledge of it increases, as they minister to the heirs of salvation. It is one aspect of angelic ministry that therein they find the delight of exploring the divine love in the history of redemption.

II.—*Limits of angelic knowledge.*

- (a) It is a mistake to regard angelic knowledge as boundless; they are creatures. Thus the Incarnation was a great revelation to them. Therein emphatically he "appeared to angels" (1 Tim. iii. 16, literal translation). It is reasonable indeed to believe that the unfolding purposes of history were manifested to them, and that in some measure they fore-knew the great revelation; but no creature could comprehend the fact of God made flesh until the mystery was accomplished.
- (b) So S. Peter says that the preaching of salvation is a thing which the angels desire to look into, as S. Peter himself looked into the mystery of the empty tomb (1 Pet. i. 12; S. John xx. 5). For angelic knowledge is not intuitive, but experimental.
- (c) As in the epistle to the Ephesians, S. Paul boldly puts the Church and Christ as complementary, and says that in each glory is ascribed to God (Eph. iii. 21, R.V.), so too he regards the Church as the special sphere of the manifestation of the divine wisdom to the spiritual hosts (Eph. iii. 10). It is the continual lot of the angels to be penetrating further into that which passes knowledge, whether of divine love or divine wisdom.

III.—*The responsibility of revelation.*

- (a) The angelic knowledge is acquired; revelation and experimental appreciation correspond to each other in a perpetual advance. The fallen angels are a warning of the great sin of knowledge abused. They knew too much to be forgiven, and sinned against light. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," is a prayer which does not extend to them.
- (b) From the angels learn something of the responsibility of knowledge in corresponding to revelation, and in appreciating it by experience. To us Almighty God has also made a revelation which passes knowledge; we must respond to it within the measure of our creatureliness. It is pride, akin to that whereby the angels fell, if we presume to deny or neglect revelation. To Almighty God alone belongs absolute knowledge.
- (c) The reverence of the angels is one great aspect of their progressive appreciation of revelation; and the singlemindedness of their service, which has swallowed up all thought of self, is another. Something of these two angelic characteristics is the condition required for the reception of divine revelation by men also.

The Bond Servant of Jesus Christ

SIXTEENTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"The slave of Jesus Christ."—Rom. i. 1.

Picture: a genuine slave, absolutely content, because devoted to a good master.

Resolve: to make his service my delight.

I.—*God's slave.*

- (a) When S. Paul used the word slave, the meaning of it was quite clear. A slave was his master's chattel, differing from his horses and cattle only in that he could understand and obey his master's will with intelligence. So appalling was the degradation of slavery as a minister of vice, that there must be something very essential in its fundamental conception to have led S. Paul to introduce the word into the Christian vocabulary. It marked his absolute subjection to his Master.
- (b) The divine Master demands such subjection of his slaves. Vocation differs, but not the claim: that is always absolute. In human slavery a certain exterior obedience satisfies. God's demand covers the whole range of interior relationship. Above all it covers the will. The natural slave had at least some relaxation: the Christian slave is never off duty.
- (c) S. Paul's description of the slave is that he is under the yoke (1 Tim. vi. 1). To deny that we are under the yoke of God is to put ourselves at the end of our service when we are only at the beginning. The whole spiritual strength must be put forth to draw the yoke. We must first take the yoke, then learn of Christ, before we can expect to find that his yoke is easy (S. Matt. xi. 29, 30).

II.—*The freeborn S. Paul glorified in his slavery.*

- (a) The slave was his master's property. Whatever he might be to his master his position towards others was secure; to them he existed only as his master's possession. Slavery meant protection, immunity from harm, so long as the slave showed the badge of slavery. When the Christian slave is attacked, from without or from within—for his Master is the only self whom he recognizes—he appeals to the Master and is safe.
- (b) S. Paul has found that to be absolutely at his Master's disposal was the way of happiness. As a Jewish student of the Scriptures he would seize the idea of the Roman slave and apply it to the Christian's relationship through the legislation of Jewish slavery, whereby the service of six years—a novitiate—could be changed into a voluntary submission for life. "I love my master; I will not go out free" (Exod. xxi. 5). Then indeed the yoke is becoming easy when the slave, who yet may never forget his place, cannot contemplate a break from his master.
- (c) Do not think that the slave is above nature: he loves his relationship, because experience has shown him its protection, and the goodness of his master. We do serve God for what we can get from him: we cannot let go the new standard of life into which we have been brought in his household. "I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out free." I cannot leave the friendships, which are in him: he has drawn me to him by innumerable influences and attractions which bind me.

III.—*The master of the slave.*

- (a) The master of the household is concerned in the welfare of his slaves. One may venture to say that it is to his interest to take the best care of his own property. "To belong to Christ in such sense that we are his property—that we cannot part with him, scarcely he with us, inasmuch as we are to him like the acres which are entailed upon a proprietor, or the regalia which are the crown jewels of a king—is a grand position for the creature, for the fallen" (C. J. Vaughan).
- (b) In the Jewish system the slave shared the passover with his master's family, but the hired servant was excluded. Consider the sacraments from this aspect; they become the gracious provision for enabling us to fulfil our appointed duties in the household. It becomes a matter of real disloyalty and insubordination if they are not so used as to enable us to do the Master's will.
- (c) So possession gives him interest in our welfare: he protects us; he provides for us; he equips us for our duties. Consider lastly that his purpose for us is for eternity, and for his own service. "His servants—it is still *slaves*—shall serve him" (Apoc. xxii. 3). That is why there is all this provision, why he demands such a relationship. Anything may do for a terminable relationship, but not for a permanent one. Anything may do for a poor master, but not for him.

The Altar Life

SIXTEENTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"The ark of the covenant . . . and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat."—Heb. ix. 4, 5.

Picture: the ark and its contents.

Resolve: more reflection upon my life as an altar life.

I.—*The contents of the ark.*

- (a) The ark is the divine altar-throne of glory; whatsoever is in it is guaranteed of God. "Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory," was the prayer of Jeremiah (xiv. 21). Apply this prayer to the manna, which in its natural state contained the principle of decay (Exod. xvi. 21), but in the ark was preserved imperishable.
- (b) The tables of the law, which gave the name to the ark "of the covenant." "Remember, break not thy covenant with us" (Jer. xiv. 21). The divine throne is over the eternal law written with the finger of God, which may not be broken. God's law is holy, just, and true; it is no earthly, arbitrary rule. The Christian revelation, directed to the heart, and carrying forgiveness with it, is likewise based on the law of God.
- (c) Aaron's rod, "blossoming" with the divine fruits of grace and healing (Numb. xvii. 8), and acting as a perpetual "token against the rebels" (ver. 10). Consider these three together: God's unalterable law; Aaron's rod, the medicine of the soul; the manna, the food of the soul. The manna must be side by side with the law; the law to be kept must have the manna; the law if broken must have Aaron's rod.

II.—*The Mercy seat.*

- (a) This was the lid of the ark, its covering. By it was symbolized the covering of sin by atonement (Ps. xxxii. 1; Rom. iii. 23-25). The Holy of holies is even called, "The place of the mercy seat" (1 Chron. xxviii. 11). On the mercy seat shone the glory of God who dwelleth between the cherubims (Ps. lxxx. 1; xcix. 1).
- (b) The mercy seat covered the tables of the law; he is just and the justifier. We speculate about the atonement; Holy Scripture asserts it in the light of the ascension of human nature in the person of Jesus Christ (Apoc. xxi. 23, 24). The atonement is based on the truth that the divine law cannot be broken.
- (c) So, too, the mercy seat covers Aaron's rod and the manna, explaining to us their place within the ark (Ps. lxxxv. 10). It is in the mysteries of the sacramental life that mercy and truth meet together in the forgiven life and fellowship; the manna and Aaron's rod are ours from beneath the mercy seat, and the divine glory above guarantees the whole revelation included in the ark.

III.—*The Cherubims.*

- (a) On the mercy seat, facing the divine glory, bending over it in worship, are the cherubims: redeemed humanity is on the throne (Apoc. iii. 21; vii. 15-17). Their faces are always towards the mercy seat. Where else should they be? They are the offspring of the atonement, and stand triumphantly now upon God's law, the fruit of Aaron's rod and the manna.
- (b) They are of one piece with the mercy seat through the beaten gold (Exod. xxv. 18). "Gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of affliction" (Ecclus. ii. 5). Many a blow and biting sculpture has gone to make this.
- (c) The whole of this complex and rich scene is the manifestation of the perfected life of communion which is the ultimate issue of the present sacramental life. Redeemed humanity, washed in the atoning blood, the beaten gold of humanity, trained by the rod and the manna, now keeping the divine law perfectly. But the same scene unfolds itself in a measure of our present life of communion, the altar life of Christians.

The Way, the Truth, and the Life

SIXTEENTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"The way, the truth, and the life."—S. John xiv. 6.

Picture: The colloquy between S. Philip and our Lord as representing the enquiry of humanity. I am the Way because I am the Truth: and I am the Truth because I am the Life.

Pray: that your eyes may be opened to understand more fully the mystery of walking in the living truth.

I.—Consider the words in their personal application to our Lord.

- (a) In the Incarnation. He manifested himself as the way to the Father. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" is one side: "No man cometh to the Father but by me" is the other side. This is so because he is the eternal Word of the Father. Thus the way to the Father is through the Incarnate Word.
- (b) He is the truth; not only true but the truth. God alone is absolute and very truth. All that is true is but a partial manifestation of him in his mighty working: but Christ is the very image of his substance (Heb. i. 3). All that was before him was type and shadow, was partial: all that is from him is truth in him. Reverence even partial truth (1 Cor. xiii. 6), and remember that it is only partial. He alone is the truth, in whom all things are summed up (Eph. i. 10).
- (c) He is life—all life of every variety, physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual (S. John i. 3, 4, R.V. marg.). Mark how broad was his sympathy with life, natural life as well as the varied life of mankind; its pleasures, as well as its perplexities and sorrows.

II.—Consider the words as related to the society of Christ.

- (a) The Christian religion was early known as the "Way" (Acts xxii. 4, etc.). Throughout the history of the world has been running one supreme way; we perceive this in some degree when we study how all history leads to Christ. The way has now been made known, and in it we may walk: the Church of Christ is the way of life, and so also the way of godliness. In the way we do not grope after, but follow along the path.
- (b) In this way is the truth: so he says "if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth" (S. John viii. 31, 32). The truth is much greater than we are: we can be in the truth, but this is not the same as having exhausted the truth. The truth is in the way of life: it is not an opinion, but the following of Jesus Christ. The creed is the Christian's rule of life.
- (c) Jesus Christ has brought "life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10). Consider the truth of the words, "The God of Abraham, etc., for all live to him" (S. Luke xx. 37, 38). The Church lives his life: hence she has variety, expansion, is many-sided, is continually bringing out of his treasure house things new and old. Do not fear; life must be progressive—it walks in the way of truth. Stagnation is death: life is the principle of movement, tends to reproduce itself.

III.—Apply to the individual.

- (a) Jesus Christ is the way for the human life: "a godly and Christian life . . . which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ and to be made like unto him" (Public Baptism of Infants). "Hold thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not" (Ps. xvii. 5). See 1 Pet. ii. 21.
- (b) To the individual this alone is the law of truth: "If ye continue in my words . . . ye shall know the truth." Dogma must be thus personalized to be found vital. It is false to the truth to think that we can hold it apart from the way of life. "Learn of me."
- (c) Thus the way and the truth are found in a life, and that life is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27). And this eternal life is not only future, but godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come (1 Tim. iv. 8).

Apply the three words of this meditation to the sacraments.

The Priesthood and the Blessed Sacrament

SIXTEENTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens."
—Heb. iv. 14.

Picture: the entrance of the High Priest into the Holy of holies on the Day of Atonement with the blood of the sacrifice.

Pray: for a fuller appreciation of the nature of the Blessed Sacrament.

I.—*The High Priest.*

- (a) No religious ceremony of the Old Testament is so elaborately worked out in the New Testament as that of the Day of Atonement in the "Hebrews." It is a fundamental instruction upon the mysteries of atonement and the essentially sacramental life of the Church. Good Friday and Ascension Day are linked indissolubly together, and the life of the Church is bound up in the abiding presence of our High Priest in the heavens for us.
- (b) There the sacrifice was annual; such sacrifices could at the very most have what S. Augustine ascribes to them as a quasi-sacramental force. The blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sins. Here the offering was made once for ever, because he offered his own will in perfect sacrifice. There the high priest alone entered into the holy of holies, while here he has entered for us as forerunner (Heb. vi. 20).
- (c) There many priests in succession offered the atonement sacrifice, and entered year by year into the holy of holies. Consider the person of him who needed not to offer first for himself, nor by reason of death ceases to offer. Neither the insufficiency of the sacrifice nor the inadequacy of the priest can put a limit to his abiding in the Holy Place.

II.—*The Christian priesthood.*

- (a) From this perpetual High Priest is derived the Christian priesthood by sacramental gift. Even there the priesthood was bestowed by divine call (Heb. v. 4), but once called the limitations were met by a material descent from father to son. Here the divine call and appointment are paramount; neither family nor any other material condition can avail.
- (b) But in the Christian priesthood the sequence must be maintained by reason of death, and the priest too must offer for himself as well as for the people. It is the priesthood which is inviolable; the priest stands daily in need of the atoning blood for himself. For their sakes, and for his, his congregation should ever be mindful of this, and support him by their prayers.
- (c) This office of priesthood bestowed upon man has its unity and perpetuity in the eternal Priest, who on earth by delegation offers what he is offering himself in the presence of God. The Christian knows of but one priesthood, and of but one Priest who ministers to us.

III.—*The Blessed Sacrament.*

- (a) The great scene in heaven is here reproduced for a moment of time on earth; the eternal and the spiritual are sacramentally manifested to us, who are spirit and matter, through the medium of the temporal and the material. It is the fruit of the Ascension in human nature restored to God through his atoning death.
- (b) In place of a ceremony the Christian Church provides a sacrifice for its worship. In place of an act external to us there is an offering of ourselves in him before the Father as redeemed and alive in him. And the limitations of our mode of existence, as in the way of salvation while yet in the body, are met by the gift of sacramental communion.
- (c) The Eucharistic sacrifice, worship and nourishment are all corporate. We are one body in him, even as there is one loaf, one chalice. Side by side we kneel, together we worship. The ascended High Priest is establishing a kingdom. He who thinks only of himself and his own salvation is not worshipping God but himself, and does not yet understand the sacrament of grace.

Called with a Vocation

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."—Eph. iv. 1.

Picture: the contrast between the lives of these Christians before and after conversion.

Pray: for correspondence to grace, seeing that we receive so liberally at his hand.

I.—Consider the place of this epistle.

- (a) S. Paul's imprisonment helped to end one great struggle of his life. As the apostle of the Gentiles he had faced the practical problem of the threatened disunion of the Church, and fought it boldly, not by concession, but by assertion of principle. His enforced withdrawal from public life was not his least service to the cause of unity.
- (b) Behind the practical problem lay the problem of thought. The question at issue was in reality the interpretation of the person of Christ. Perceived first in relation to the basis of justification, it was now being realized as the problem of his unique supremacy. In the epistle to the Colossians he is presented as the mediator and sustainer of the two creations.
- (c) The epistle to the Ephesians unites the double conflict, of the pharisaic Judaism of Palestine and the hellenistic Judaism of the dispersion, in the revelation of the Church as the historical development of the Messiah. The unity of the Church, the unity of thought, the unity of life, are all ultimately bound up in the unity of Christ and of God.

II.—Consider the words.

- (a) "Therefore" (Eph. iv. 1). He is beginning the application of the great theme, and picks up the great summaries of his preceding sections (cp. iii. 1). Christian life is a great "Therefore"; a consequent upon the great revelation of life and grace. Grasp the doctrine; and realize it through application.
- (b) "I . . . the prisoner of the Lord," no longer active, but yet able to pray for you; with *you* rests the application. He has described himself as the prisoner of Jesus Christ (iii. 1), who had brought that gospel to the Gentiles of which he was the apostle. But now he is thinking of his fellowship with Christ, and is contemplating the corporate life of the Church ruled over by the great Lord of all creation.
- (c) "That ye walk worthy." This is the spiritual aim of the Christian to whom the Creed is the rule of daily life. It is his high ambition to correspond to the revealed truth of Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God, conscious that the truth is the way also and the life.

III.—The vocation wherewith ye are called.

- (a) "Called with a calling." Brought out and made members of so great a fellowship, all things indeed are yours. Sharing in the most exalted traditions and associations through the course of history, walk worthily of them. Be mindful of the whole fellowship, making your conduct worthy of your incorporation into God's new Man.
- (b) The "wherewith ye are called" implies the inherent power of the new life. The vocation is that of having been made Christians, and the responsibility is to find in daily life the reality of that calling, as the Christian lives upon its gifts. Pray for correspondence to grace; we receive so much.
- (c) Primarily the thought in "vocation" is that of the great responsibility and gift of baptism. No particular vocation in Christian life can equal this fundamental vocation; nor can any special vocation be clearly seen and followed without faithful adherence to the great vocation of being made a Christian. Do not, however, limit special vocations to the priesthood, the religious life, or missionary service. All life is God's.

The Silence of Jesus Christ

SEVENTEENTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"And they held their peace."—S. Luke xiv. 4.

Picture: the scene.

Pray: for the grace of Christ's silence.

I.—*Causes of their silence.*

- (a) Perplexity. The case was not so obvious to them as it was to him. It was not for everybody to upset Moses' law, and they would reason that he could have healed him on another day. Moreover, there was in the question a claim which they could not meet; it was not clear to them by what authority he said and did these things.
- (b) Personal prejudice, which often goes with perplexity. Under other circumstances they would probably not have questioned such an act. But they were watching him, and the question implied a challenge, and in their suspicion and perplexity they were afraid of being caught in their speech. So, too, when he asked them of John's baptism, they preferred to say, "We cannot tell" (see S. Mark xi. 27-33). And these were the men who tried to entangle him in his talk (S. Matt. xxii. 15).
- (c) Spiritual blindness. It was the issue of a long course of national history without true vitality. Superficiality, insincerity, suspicion, prejudice, form an ugly set of companions, closely related to one another. The Pharisees were rendered incapable of understanding him. Contrast the simple honesty of the man who was born blind (S. John ix. 16, 17, 25, 30, 33), and the issue (ver. 38).

II.—*The silence of Jesus Christ.*

- (a) The silence of dignity. When the hired false witnesses perverted his words, and trumped up an accusation against him, he neither could nor would reply. Nor would he speak before a travesty of high priestly judgment, until in the appeal in the name of God the office of the high priest required an answer (S. Matt. xxvi. 63-64).
- (b) The uselessness of speech, when the chief priests and Pilate were working together. It was a degradation of the spiritual; and it was a trimming policy on the part of Pilate (S. Matt. xxvii. 12, 14). Of the two he would speak to Pilate rather than to the religious leaders compromised by their worldly weapons (S. John xviii. 33-37; xix. 9, 11).
- (c) The silence of indignation and contempt. To Herod he would say nothing (S. Luke xxiii. 9). He was "that fox" who had killed John Baptist, who had tried to frighten Jesus (S. Luke xiii. 31-33), who had a superstitious fear of John Baptist (S. Mark vi. 20), and a superstitious curiosity to see Jesus (S. Matt. xiv. 1; S. Luke xxiii. 8).

III.—*The grace of Jesus Christ's silence.*

- (a) To keep us silent when speech is undesirable. There is also a grace of silence to be cultivated; it is good to learn to be able to be silent at any time, as a discipline of the tongue to be able to keep silent when silence is valuable.
- (b) To give us grace of speech with him. To learn to be silent, as a self-discipline is good; to learn to be silent that one may speak to him is better. But there are times when we are wrongly silent to him, closing the heart against him, or when we are in a wrong disposition, and would but cannot speak to him. Then may his silence give us grace of speech with him!
- (c) To open the heart when it is silent after some manifestation of graciousness from him, and he would have us open our heart to him and praise him for his mercy. A good use of silence is to make the heart free for praise and thanksgiving. If we filled up less time in idle speech, which keeps the heart from reflection, we should find more to say to him.

Over all, in all, through all

SEVENTEENTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Over all and through all and in all."—Eph. iv. 6 (R.V.).

Picture : the whole world as God's family.

Pray : for a larger heart.

I.—*The words.*

- (a) It is very tempting to interpret directly of the Holy Trinity. Yet the preceding words, "One God and Father of all" must make us hesitate, if not more than that. At any rate reflect that the Father is the source of life in the Blessed Trinity. One may concede so much as that he is revealed through and approached through the Word and the Spirit. These words of S. Paul will check any tendency to tritheism in our idea of the Blessed Trinity, such as may arise through carelessness in thought, and is of course irreverent.
- (b) Are the words used in reference to Christians only? This becomes more urgent when the word "you" is rightly omitted. There is no doubt that the apostle's words have taken rise from the unity of the Church; but it looks as if in the climax he has burst the bonds of his thoughts, and sees in the Church the fulfilment of the whole purpose of God, who rules, pervades, and sustains all.
- (c) And if this be so, the last difficulty of interpretation will be solved, and we shall not confine the "all" to human life. He is over all things and events, he pervades all that truly is, and he sustains all things, unifying the variety of things, and giving them the cohesion of purpose.

II.—*A more simple reflection.*

- (a) He is over all. It should inspire us with great confidence, if we live morally in this belief. Faint-heartedness in Christians comes from a partial glimpse of God; a clearer sight of him encourages. Both the world and the Church are under his rule, and he is not to be thwarted or defeated. He is working out his purposes.
- (b) He is through all. A lesson of reverence both in prayer and in thought. It is so easy to be secular, and to forget that he is moving and acting through all the issues and events of life and history. It is so easy and so irresponsible to say that God does everything, when we know that there is a great deal that is wrong with the world. But do we with patience wait to see in what way God is acting *through* the movements which are so complicated?
- (c) He is in all. What a solemn reminder of respect for the individual, for the opinion which differs from mine, for the liberty of another which limits my liberty! How unbelieving it is to be self-assertive, aggressive, domineering, intolerant, and the like. And we heighten the effect of these words if we remember that S. Paul does not merely say that God is in all, but God the universal Father. And see iii. 14, 15.

III.—*In reference to the Church.*

- (a) The words form a climax to the description of the one Body, animated by one spirit, stimulated by one hope. Over it all is the great and good Father; Father of the Church doubly, for Father of all. It is the trumpet call to the Church in its relation to a world which denies his Fatherhood and the Church's sonship. But the Church may not forget that he is the universal Father; it is her encouragement to remember it in her mission to the world.
- (b) And what sense of fellowship and corporate union in the Church! And how must one strive to get at this in actual realization, until the Church gives the world an illustration of corporate unity, and convinces her of the only way in which the brotherhood of man is to find realization!
- (c) In all. Apply again to Church life, and may the truth of it in prayer and fellowship help to break down the ugly narrownesses and littlenesses of partizan spirit, spiritual rivalry and petty exclusiveness. God is not only in you. And seek the prayers of others, and be not too proud to be helped by the sympathy of others. God is in them also.

The Watch of Jesus

SEVENTEENTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*They watched him.*"—S. Luke xiv. 1.

Picture: the scene.

Resolve: to study Christ more closely and reverently.

I.—*The continuous watch.*

- (a) What a terrible revelation is this scene of the depravity of the human heart, and of the blindness of prejudice! Nothing was further from their thoughts than the intention of attacking goodness, but they were just incapable of appreciating the sublime manifestation of life which soared immeasurably above their highest ideals. Nor did the fault lie solely in themselves: generations of education had led to this result. There are some who cannot believe: incredible as it seems, there are some who cannot even admire the character of Jesus Christ.
- (b) Thank God when Jesus Christ is watched by severe scrutiny. Anything is better than indifference. It may seem to theological students as if one dangerous school of gospel criticism only becomes out of date to make way for another, until one wearies of patient study and investigation. But what higher testimony can be desired to the universal attraction of Jesus Christ! Consider, too, that this watch contributes to the revelation of Jesus Christ to succeeding ages, as one means whereby he unfolds the interpretation of himself, and sifts vital faith from a traditionalism which is as dangerous to Christianity as it was to Judaism.
- (c) Have no fear for Jesus Christ as he stands boldly facing the twentieth century of Eastern and European intellectual investigation. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" he calmly said; and they judged him worthy of death: but he rules to-day immeasurably more triumphantly than then. In the spirit of confidence which he inspires, take warning from them of old time, and learn to rise above the passion of prejudice and the ascription of bad motives to those who are opposed to us.

II.—*The devout watch.*

- (a) Happy is the man who, while thus watching him to find in him the answer to the problems and queries of each generation of life and thought, is learning that he was not only watched by active partizans, but at all times also by a devout watch of angels and men. The Christian must combine this with his intellectual scrutiny: he must watch in worship. Every object of study must be approached in the spirit proper to it: the study of Jesus Christ is illuminated by devout worship.
- (b) The angels watched him, at his birth, in his temptation, during his agony, in death. In each crisis of humiliation to deity the angels watched, learned, and worshipped. Each crisis provides for us, too, a lesson in experience, and a trial to faith: and in each crisis he invites human worship. Shepherds came to his birth-chamber; he revealed his temptation to disciples who have made it known to the Church; the three were invited to watch with him in the hour of his agony; the women who followed from Galilee, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus watched at his cross and by his grave.
- (c) This watch of his humiliation we may be sure is the most rich in instruction; and he has secured for us our participation in it not merely by prayer and meditation, but by active co-operation. The Eucharistic life of Jesus Christ remains until this day the privileged watch of his inner circle, wherein they share the angels' vigils. Here scrutiny bows its head, and here worship is learned.

III.—*The soldiers' watch.*

- (a) In one of these scenes of the devout watch others shared. His death was fittingly public. Especially consider the soldiers' watch at the foot of his cross. The picture suggests yet another aspect of life; there is the warfare of the knight of Jesus Christ.
- (b) Watch him as the rule of life. The scrutiny is for the practical problem of life, and not for the idle speculation of intellectual interest. This heightens the responsibility of the scrutiny and its relation to the devout watch: life to each one of us is the ultimate responsibility.
- (c) "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Watch for him at all times, Watch for his coming; to you, in each problem, in every age,

Bound and not Bound

SEVENTEENTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*The prisoner of the Lord.*"—Eph. iv. 1.

"*But the word of God is not bound.*"—2 Tim. ii. 9.

Picture: S. Paul's work while a prisoner in Rome.

Resolve: increased faith in God when circumstances seem adverse.

I.—Consider S. Paul's circumstances.

- (a) A prisoner in Caesarea, and then in Rome. Do not deny that these four to five years were a great trial to so ardent a nature, but weigh well the divine grace which enabled him to rise above his trial to the conviction that "all is right which seems most wrong, if it be his sweet will." The word of God was not bound in his heart; it was his own will which was bound in subjection to God.
- (b) The ardent worker often finds it difficult to be put on one side, and feels therein as if deserted by God: the enthusiast cannot bear to be thwarted by obstacles. S. Paul did not easily acquiesce in defeat or submit to opposition, but he learned to look for the will of God, and he knew that "God's will is sweetest to him when it triumphs at his cost."
- (c) When we consider this elevation of S. Paul, remember that such a spiritual height has to be scaled: to attain to it was no more easy for him than for us. But it was a possibility to him because he worshipped the will of God, and did not resist his grace by the pride of worshipping his own will.

II.—Consider the fruitfulness of this period.

- (a) He could pray. In himself alone could any obstacle to prayer have existed; by surrender of himself to the will of God he had increased his power to use this most fruitful weapon of spiritual warfare. Many will consider this insistence upon S. Paul's prayers at this time as an admission that he was no longer of any use; but S. Paul never doubted that his prayers were of more avail than his Herculean labours.
- (b) His total surrender to God, now manifested to the full, is seen to be the real power of his previous life. Because in activity he had thus been the instrument of God—a chosen vessel (Acts ix. 15)—he was able now to see the good hand of God in all that befell him. Throughout these epistles he glories in being the Lord's prisoner; a heart content with God is a power of divine influence.
- (c) He did not doubt that the word of God was not bound, and according to his faith so it was. Onesimus came under his sway; the Roman Church was comforted by his faith (Rom. i. 12); the Church grew among the slaves and the soldiers. His removal from active life withdrew the great impediment to that understanding of Jew and Gentile Christians which he had risked his life to bring about. And the epistles! The whole Church has lived upon them; generations of saints have been built up on them.

III.—Bound and not bound.

- (a) The servant of the Lord must always in some measure be bound, whether in spirit voluntarily as a slave, or, more often, and as is safer for him, also involuntarily handicapped, in various ways impeded, that he may know that it is not "by might nor by power, but by my Spirit." It directs him to prevailing prayer, and to the throwing of his cares upon God.
- (b) Consider not to be discouraged by inadequacy of means and opportunity. Spiritual things must be accomplished by spiritual; holy lives are the freedom of God's word. Sacrifice, lives of prayer, self-denial, trust in God, are not these greater weapons than numbers, ability, and restless activity?
- (c) Learn not to lose heart over the kingdom of God. The Church looks very feeble against the triumphant success of the world; over against its flaunting power we can only set the insignificance of the sacraments and the foolishness of the gospel. But it is the victory of the Crucified: look to his power as he is bound hand and foot.

Keeping in the Love of God

SEVENTEENTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Keep yourselves in the love of God."—Jude 21.

Picture: the perfection and the happiness of the saints.

Pray: for fixed purpose.

I.—*"In the love of God."*

- (a) To abide in God is to abide in his love; that life is most full which abiding in him realizes that his love is inseparable from his self-revelation to his own. It is in close connection with the analogy of the vine that our Lord said, "Continue ye in my love"; and he made his relation to his members correspond to the Father's relation to himself (S. John xv. 9).
- (b) These words present the Christian life as a response. How much more encouraging it is to look upon life as a surrender to Almighty God's love than to view it as a stupendous effort! When in baptism we were immersed into the Triune Name we were put into the atmosphere of the divine life.
- (c) They present also a true aspect of the love of God. There is his love: it is not changed because we withdraw from it: the change is on our part; we have not kept ourselves in his love. By penitence we may return into his love and again abide in it.

II.—*"Keep yourselves."*

- (a) Love is a purpose. Considered from this side it is relieved of the scruple which attaches to its more emotional experience. The purpose may be apprehended in various ways, but its pursuit is the fruit of love, the bending of the whole person in determination to keep himself within the love of God.
- (b) It requires cultivation, for it grows by exercise and dies by neglect. There are many rival claims, and without diligence they may draw us off and come to seem more desirable. The Latin word teaches us that "diligence" is the choice between competitors. Some never attain to love, because the mind is not stable. There is no purpose.
- (c) The words are a command. The subject is capable of command, because purpose is the bending of the will towards the object of one's choice. Consider further that his love necessarily makes such demands upon us; it is of the nature of love to demand response, for it empties itself in desire to be filled with the object of its love.

III.—*"Keep yourselves in the love of God."*

- (a) The obedience of love removes the demands of God in Christ from the sphere of cold duty. Why do I struggle to do what is right, feeling it to be hard? Is it not that I have failed to appreciate sufficiently the love which makes the demand of me? Why is my penitence so barren? Is it not that I do not grasp the love which is waiting for me?
- (b) The command removes the sting from temptation. All things are possible to him who loves; temptation attracts by a correspondence within us to it. The presence of a stronger attraction withdraws the attractiveness from temptation. And the response to love assimilates us to the object of our love.
- (c) The words convey the secret of the command. To abide in him is to be hidden in the recesses of his power and protection. The apostle reminds us that to abide in him is to abide in his love, in order that we may desire to cultivate this abiding in him, and so not become like those who having been brought out of Egypt afterwards perished, or like the angels who abode not in God's love (Jude 5, 6). And the words contain the protection against scrupulosity. We are to abide in his love, not in our love to him.

Meekness

SEVENTEENTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."—S. Matt. v. 5.

Consider: the divine example.

Resolve: to restrain self-assertion.

I.—*The beatitude.*

- (a) The beatitudes express aspects of saintship; collectively they describe the ideal of Christian character. In different ways Christians exemplify these aspects; one only has revealed their unity in life. It is not given to the imitator to do more than follow the Master at a great distance; but he who strives to be a disciple will seek to follow and not merely to avoid losing his soul.
- (b) The character of meekness is perhaps the most revolutionary of those marked. In the world of that age it was regarded as contemptible in free men. Times change, and yet to-day the world does not appreciate meekness; it offers to it a patronizing approval. Even Christians are apt to regard it as a grace appropriate to the weak.
- (c) The first Christian generation was profoundly impressed by the teaching of Christ on this matter. S. Paul knew that the Corinthians would understand his reference to the words of our Lord, when he besought them by the gentleness and meekness of Christ (2 Cor. x. 1; cp. Eph. iv. 2).

II.—*The meekness of Christ.*

- (a) In the hyperbolic language of oriental speech this character is described not as being driven to the wall but as inheriting the earth. The victories of meekness are easily lost sight of; it does not conquer, it wins. It was thus with him, who deliberately laid aside all earthly ambitions and rules of leadership, and yet after whom the world went (S. John xii. 19).
- (b) The meekness of Christ may be seen in various aspects. He came to minister, and no one was reckoned beneath him; he never condescended. It is seen in his reverence for man, who never dominated over men's minds; and in his submission to all lawful authority. Meekness realizes the superiority of character over force, and reality over opinion.
- (c) It is from his life that we learn to perceive the parody of meekness which is often paraded. He who said "I am meek and lowly of heart," gave at that moment an exhibition of the sympathy of meekness; and in his independence of judgment, freedom from the tyranny of public opinion, boldness of rebuke, courageous tenacity of purpose, he has revealed that meekness is not inconsistent with strength of character.

III.—*The grace of meekness.*

- (a) The misunderstanding of meekness is due to an essentially heathen idea that character is natural. We have not even yet done justice to grace, which can make meekness to grow on most unpromising soil (Gal. v. 22, 23). But meekness will not be found where there is not grace to reverence the divine in others, and to realize the natural in one's self.
- (b) Rightly intentioned as was S. James' request for the seat next to our Lord, it evidenced in its form a lack of meekness, which caused a natural resentment among the ten (S. Matt. xx. 24 ff.), and yet it was rather their lack of meekness than his which was censured. His lack, however, received a silent rebuke when the Lord went to another village (S. Luke ix. 52 ff.).
- (c) Of his growth in this grace we know nothing: he appears again only in the brief word that Herod slew him. A good death atones for many blemishes. But the quietness of S. Luke's narrative speaks eloquently of a time when the grace of God among the Christians was such that martyrdom was regarded with calmness. James had responded to the call of God.

Jesus Christ the Touchstone

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"What think ye of Christ?"—S. Matt. xxii. 42

Consider: him as the touchstone of our lives.

Resolve: surrender of self and of will.

I.—*The repulsion and the attraction of Christ.*

- (a) There are certain things in life which show what a man really is: a danger, an unexpected loss, or sudden wealth. Jesus Christ is that to our lives. He is too strict for the flippant, too righteous for the respectable; but he is attractive to the humble, the penitent, the man of single purpose.
- (b) We can illustrate this from the gospel records. He offended the religious; the majority cared for nothing beyond his healing; many liked his words superficially. Herod was attracted and yet afraid: Pilate was puzzled: Judas misunderstood him. But others were drawn to him; they found that he had the words of eternal life.
- (c) This is not due to any limitation in him. The difference is not in him but in us, in the purpose of our lives. The great responsibility of our life is what we think of him. To some he remains a visionary, to others an idealist, to others an interesting problem; some secretly hate him because he is a silent reproof.

II.—*The silent Judge.*

- (a) Jesus Christ is thus always judging us in silence. Men think at times that they are scrutinizing him, whereas it is he who is revealing them. Men think at times as if he were in need of their approval; they fail to see that he is weighing them. There is no need for him to pronounce judgment; men pronounce their own judgment.
- (b) Most clearly is this seen in such cases as the rich young man, the man who would have the inheritance divided with his brother, the woman who entered the house and bathed his feet. It is seen very clearly in the controversies of the fourth Gospel. It was seen in S. Peter's answer to the query: "But whom say ye that I am?"
- (c) But most startlingly it is seen in the scenes of the trial, and particularly in the Pilate narrative. It was not Pilate who was judging Jesus; it was Pilate who was on trial. So, too, it was the high priest who was condemned by his attitude towards the Messiah.

III.—*Jesus Christ reaches the heart.*

- (a) There are those who would first decide about Jesus, and then they think that they will give him their heart. Let them surrender themselves to him, and he will soon make known to them who he is. Happily there are many who give him their heart, and thus, though they may be perplexed, they will not be left by him until he has opened their minds.
- (b) It was said of him that he was set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel, that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed (S. Luke ii. 34-35). It is a grave reflection for the many who can think of him superficially, persuading themselves that he will be content with lip-service, and with the patronizing attendance at Church parade. It is a grave reflection for us who are so little influenced by him, because there is so very little that is genuine in us for him to take hold of.
- (c) Jesus Christ is the touchstone of the purpose of the heart, its singleness, its surrender. If he is not to us greater than ourselves, and if we are not ready to submit to his greatness, we judge ourselves. And the answer has to be given from the mainspring of life: he is not a matter of opinion, an æsthetic taste, an intellectual aspect.

The Grace of God

EIGHTEENTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ."—1 Cor. i. 4.

Picture: the fellowship between S. Paul and S. Luke, the evangelist of thanksgiving and grace.

Resolve: to make thanksgiving for grace an element of my devotions.

I.—*"I thank my God."*

- (a) The Corinthians did not sufficiently appreciate the grace of God; they were self-confident. But grace not used is yet a matter of thanksgiving: it was not God's bounty which was limited. How much grace has he been willing to give us, which we have not received, and have never thought to thank him for?
- (b) Others, too, receive his grace, thoughtlessly and unthankfully, some receive and abuse it. It is one office of the cheerful Christian to thank God for all this grace, especially for his grace of long-suffering. Such thanksgiving is in itself an intercession, and also it brings a reward in a cheerful and contented spirit.
- (c) Always look for subjects of thanksgiving. S. Paul commences every epistle but one with such an act of thanksgiving. The principle lay deep; it was not merely a good Christian practice, but a serious conviction of God's abundant generosity, and that all is of him.

II.—*"For the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ."*

- (a) The Corinthian Church was very full of faults, but not from lack of grace. Let no one think that he has not grace sufficient for his needs, if he will but use it. So long as sacraments are available the grace of God has a free course; if sacraments be withdrawn, his grace overflows as even now it does, where there is an ignorance of his ways which is not wilful and perverse.
- (b) The extraordinary gifts of the Corinthians were not a substitute for the more humble but more essential gifts of spiritual life. The greatest gifts of grace are just those which all receive. S. Luke did not thus value grace because he was a historian, but because he had been called out of darkness into light; nor is he a saint because he wrote books, but because he humbled his Greek pride to receive the truth which involved adherence to a sect of Judaism. And this humility was a fruit of grace; the Lord opened his heart.
- (c) His grace comes to us through Jesus Christ, and the third Gospel manifests this in various ways, especially in its boundless freedom. Jesus Christ not only reveals to us the graciousness of God, but by his atonement he removes the impediment to its fuller display, and by his Incarnation becomes the channel through which it is poured out upon his members.

III.—*Apply these thoughts to the present time.*

- (a) We think too little of grace and consequently of thanksgiving. Independence, strength of character, pride of knowledge act often as impediments to the reception of grace; we are much like the Corinthians. We would rather by searching find out God, than by opening our hearts to receive his gifts find the proof of him within us.
- (b) Apply these thoughts to the Church of the present age. With all her faults she has the grace of God, in the sacraments, in her life. No faults, however glaring, can blind her children to this essential truth. Her faults indeed are such, that the fact of her continued life is the manifest proof of God's grace. When she awakes to a fuller belief in the grace given to the Church then we shall see wonders.
- (c) But do not underestimate her manifestations of grace, even now, in her witness to God, her care for the souls of men, her missionary zeal, her good works, her faith. S. Luke was a missionary, a historian, and a doctor. In all these the Church in England walks not altogether unfaithfully in his steps.

The World, the Flesh, and the Devil

EIGHTEENTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"The world, the flesh, and the devil."—Collect.

Picture: the temptation of Eve, and of Jesus Christ.

Pray: for grace to withstand rather than for release from being tempted.

I.—*The world.*

- (a) The combination of world, flesh, and devil is neither Biblical nor primitive. But observe that nothing is said here or in the Baptismal Service or in the Catechism of the world being evil. Here it is the temptation which the world offers to man; elsewhere particularized by its vain pomp and glory and man's covetous desires thereof. The temptation lies in man's hanker ing after what does not endure.
- (b) S. John writes most clearly of the world as the rival claimant of God, and of worldliness consequently as distraction from him, a temper of mind which misuses the world. He writes of the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vain glory of life as being of the world (1 S. John ii. 16). Are there not signs of this temper in myself? Am I striving to resist the temptation?
- (c) There is much to attract and allure in life which is agreeable, and not in itself wrong. Herein lies the danger for us who are made for high ends which endure. We must use self-control in the exercise of liberty. We must use the world as sons of the Father who has created it, and not as the sphere of our temporal satisfaction.

II.—*The flesh.*

- (a) The temptation of the flesh arises definitely out of our nature, with its legitimate desires and passions. The modern division between the world and the flesh is not in superficial harmony with S. John, who has the lust of the flesh as "of the world." But the P.B. has confined the world rather to its vain glory, and has regarded the flesh as the carnal desires.
- (b) It is the insubordination of proper instincts, rather than the response of man to the allurements of that which is outside him. We must think here of indulgence in sleep, in food, in luxury, and of the self-control of the flesh through Christian self-discipline. The flesh is not identical with the body, but the temptation of the flesh must be guarded against by bringing the body into bondage.
- (c) In the natural constitution of man the will is to rule. If that supremacy be lost there follows slavery to the man. The collect rightly bids us as Christians pray that grace may aid us, strengthening the will to resist temptation that the flesh may be subject to the spirit.

III.—*The devil.*

- (a) S. John's threefold division has not named the devil; but it provides appropriate treatment for the typical temptations of the Old and New Testament. The tree was good for food (the lust of the flesh), pleasant to the eyes (the lust of the eyes), and to be desired to make one wise (the vain glory of life); the Gospel temptation of stones to bread, the kingdoms of the world, the presumptuous reliance on God for personal ostentation, lends itself to similar division. But the devil or the serpent is presented as the prime factor.
- (b) In the Prayer-book division the devil is not regarded as responsible for all temptation, and one ought, perhaps, rather to think of temptation to those evils which are most like him—the works of the devil. Neither has S. James thought of all temptation as proceeding from the devil (S. James i. 14).
- (c) Consider, therefore, spiritual sins of pride, envy, and jealousy; the sins of temper, and the specially diabolical sins of presumption and self-satisfaction, or of scrupulosity and despair. Nor forget that we have to withstand the wiles of the devil (Eph. vi. 11-12), against whose cunning devices we are incompetent to struggle without the grace of God.

The First Commandment

EIGHTEENTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."—S. Matt. xxii. 37.

Picture: the rapture of the saints in heaven.

Resolve: pray that you may love God truly not in word only but in deed.

I.—*Love is a grace.*

- (a) God can only be loved worthily by that which is itself of him. No natural love is capable of satisfying his requirement. And it is not natural for us to love God, but to love ourselves and to love the world and the praise of man. It must be his love in us which is making us to love him.
- (b) It is God's crowning gift to the saints. They did not begin by loving him superabundantly. They began by purging their lives of sin, by mortifying their wills, by using instead of resisting grace. Slowly they grew up into the love of God as their lives were illuminated by grace, until at length they loved him purely and singly.
- (c) God cannot give us this grace until we are able to receive it. Were it possible for us to love God deeply while yet we are so full of sin we should ruin our souls by substituting a sentimental and emotional religion for the religion of holiness, or we should fall into despair when we gave way to sin after the realization of his love.

II.—*Why we love him so little.*

- (a) Because we are only in the lowest stages of the spiritual life; we can scarcely pray as yet, or resist temptation; and we love ourselves a great deal too much. God's love is jealous; it brooks no rival; the love of the world is enmity against God. Sin and the love of God are incompatible.
- (b) Because God's love is the burning glow of his consuming holiness, and we are too unready to approach its fire. It must burn out our dross before we can glow with its heat. We shrink from what is involved in loving God, and would have his highest gift before we have learnt to measure its value.
- (c) Because until the work of grace has gone on within us sufficiently to teach us deep penitence (Job xlii. 5, 6; S. Luke v. 8), we do not realize how infinite is his love to us, or what we are to love in him and to what infinite degree.

III.—*How to begin to love God.*

- (a) Here is only the question of beginning: we have the purgatorial life for its more rapid progress, and eternity of heaven for its full experience. Take courage.
- (b) First the heart must be purified of sin. Deadly sin kills the love of God. To make progress in loving him we must keep the heart free from all wilful venial sin.
- (c) By loving our brethren (1 S. John iii. 14, 17; iv. 20): that is by going out from our self-love. The second great commandment prepares for the first, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."
- (d) By seeking this grace as we seek every other grace. By prayer, by consideration of the value of this grace, by considering why we should love him. Use devotions to the Sacred Passion on every Friday. Make meditations on the love of God: use suitable ejaculations—"Oh God, make me to love thee." Make intentions at communion.

Coming Behind in no Gift

EIGHTEENTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"So that ye come behind in no gift."—1 Cor. i. 7.

Picture: the Corinthian Church, pleased with itself, yet unfruitful; contrast the man in the parable with one talent, who was unfruitful because displeased with his state.

Resolve: to think more of God's gifts of grace.

I.—*"Ye come behind in no gift."*

- (a) Historically it was so: the Corinthians did not lack any of the divine gifts, whether the more spiritual or the more attractive ones; all were theirs, if they would covet them. Apply to our own branch of the Church: what do we lack in her? She comes behind in no gift, having them all in the sacraments. Any deficiency is in ourselves, not in the Church.
- (b) An individual application. Each Christian comes behind in no gift. Redemption is his and grace, in and through the sacraments. Nothing is lacking to us in the gifts of God, which the saints have had. How slow our progress, and yet all the gifts are at our disposal, if we will use them. Take courage.
- (c) A warning against spiritual faithlessness. We think that we are too feeble for what God would have us do. What gift is he unwilling to supply for any work to which he calls us? He will supply both a good will, steady perseverance, and all the graces which the strain of life will require us to exercise.

II.—*The gifts contemplated in this passage were rather the exterior gifts than what we regard as the more spiritual gifts of grace.*

- (a) Apply therefore to natural endowments, and the words are still true. God chooses his worker as he will, and as he too has equipped him. The Corinthians were abundantly supplied with gifts of miracles, tongues, prophesyings, and yet they were thoroughly superficial and unspiritual. Perhaps the contrary danger is more common in those who would serve God; the one talent seems not enough for attempting to do anything. Yet he was not condemned for having only one talent, but for not having done the obvious thing with it.
- (b) But perhaps our gifts are not sufficient for what we should like to do. A very different matter; ambition of a big work, distinguished and striking like the gifts on which the Corinthians prided themselves. Such an ambition may well blind us as to what *his* work is that he would have us do.
- (c) Sometimes there seems a manifest deficiency. S. Paul's ill health must have hindered his work: S. Peter was not a very intellectual man for a prince of the Church. Such defects enhance God's grace; he will often do much with poor tools.

III.—*What rebuke in these words!*

- (a) The natural gifts wasted by idleness, jealousy of other gifts, secularity, self-satisfaction, or by distrust, feebleness of purpose and the like.
- (b) The spiritual gifts undeveloped by prayer, devotion, faithful use of the sacraments. Love, patience, humility, perseverance, these greater gifts not sought.
- (c) And yet even now we can have grace for grace, by emptying of self, and by firm grasp of this word of God whereby we go on boldly, trusting in *him*.

The Worship of Jesus Christ

EIGHTEENTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."—Ps. cx. 1; S. Matt. xxii. 44.

Picture: the Son of Man seated in glory with the holy angels round him.

Resolve: the worship of Jesus Christ.

I.—*The two scenes.*

- (a) The scene passes from earth to heaven. David's royal son is my Lord, who is exalted to the right-hand seat. In earlier Jewish prophecy the anointed king was conceived as frankly human; in later days the Messiah in apocalyptic literature became supramundane. The harmonizing of these elements in the person of the Incarnate Son was a stumbling block to the Jews.
- (b) While the Jews did not connect the prophecies relating to the manifestation of the day of the Lord with those of the scion of the house of David, we do so boldly in the truth of the Ascension. The Son of David has entered upon his royal sway.
- (c) The angels share this experience with us, but enjoy it in a far higher degree. Since their creation they have worshipped the divine Word; when they minister as the divine agents they worship him in creation by service. Since the Incarnation they worship him in human nature also with an intelligence which corresponds to the unfolding appreciation of his redemptive work.

II.—*"Sit thou on my right hand."*

- (a) The epistle to the Hebrews has seized on these words as expressive of the dignity of the Son, who is the sharer of the Father's throne. He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. After the work of redemption is the rest of the session, and the honour bestowed on his victorious human nature.
- (b) The writer has dwelt also upon the unique position. No angel has ever been singled out for individual dignity, although they are highly distinguished as a class. The angels are sons of God (Job ii. 1; Ps. lxxxix. 6), but not to any one of them belongs the proud dignity of being addressed as "Thou art my Son" (Heb. i. 5, 13).
- (c) And the session of the Son is the assumption of rule as the reward of victory. The angels are but attendant ministers, busy in his service. When he was on earth they ministered to him in his humility; now they minister to him in the person of those who shall be heirs of salvation through him (Heb. i. 14).

III.—*"Until I make thine enemies thy footstool."*

- (a) The defeating blow has already been struck. Now he sits expecting in confident assurance the accomplishment of his work. The simile is that of vanquished enemies being brought to his footstool as to the presence of their conqueror: but is it for destruction or submission? Is Agag a type or Mephibosheth?
- (b) Here too the angels minister, as they will do at the last. Sent forth to do service they bring many a vanquished foe to his pierced feet, to seize them and bedew them with the tears of penitence. And such he raises to be partners of his throne. And they also who will not seek for pardon must come at last to his feet, which are like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace (Apoc. i. 15).
- (c) His feet are the place of worship. When S. John fell at the angel's feet he was rebuked (Apoc. xix. 10; xxii. 8, 9); their feet were ready to be dispatched on duty. But when he fell as dead at the feet of the ascended Lord, he raised him up (Apoc. i. 17).

Worldliness

EIGHTEENTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."—1 S. John ii. 15.

Picture: the holy angels in their singleness of devotion to the divine service are never distracted by any outside interest.

Pray: that these spiritual servants of God may be a continual warning to us against the spirit of worldliness.

I.—*The world.*

- (a) We speak of the world, the flesh, and the devil. We can never expect to be rid of the last, he will find us out anywhere; as to the flesh we cannot escape from ourselves. But there are circumstances in which we fondly hope that we have said good-bye to the first. We think that ordination, giving one's self up to parochial work, a theological college, and especially a Religious House, or to give up parties, gaiety, and smart dressing will secure immunity from the temptations of the world.
- (b) Many meanings attach to this word "World." God made it, and upholds it, and loves it. This is not what S. John means when he says, "Love not the world." With him the world is just society apart from God, and this is why its love is incompatible with the love of the Father. Thus in this epistle he says, "The world passeth away," and in his gospel, "He was in the world, and the world knew him not."
- (c) Hence to those who would serve God the temptation of the world is very great, and is not to be avoided by running away from it, but by holding fast to God. It is easy to lose God by distraction, dissipation of purpose, by being engrossed in work.

II.—*Marks of its presence.*

- (a) Dissatisfaction. Little things begin to worry, the spring of life goes, routine becomes a pressure. When it becomes very bad we lose the power of prayer; this is always an advanced stage of accidia: general discontent with self, others, one's surroundings. We ought always to be discontented with ourselves, but content to be discontented.
- (b) To think more of the praise of men than of God. Rather than offend man one will endure an uneasy conscience, and even make light of sin. Frivolous conduct with others is often a mark of this temper; one has missed for a time the friendship of God, and in spiritual restlessness turns to the distraction of liveliness.
- (c) Forgetfulness that to whom much is given of him much will be required. Worldliness is manifested in nothing sooner than in acquiescence in an easy standard. Such an one is easily satisfied that, because he has not committed definite sin, he is getting on well; he does not press forward; he prefers the smooth things.

III.—*Its remedy.*

- (a) To recognize that one has lost touch with God through thinking too lightly of him. There must be a grave facing of the truth of God's glory and his severity. He will not give his glory to another nor permit himself to be treated with lightness.
- (b) A return to first principles. Worldliness has grown up gradually, and with it a loss of fervour and purpose. These must be renewed after penitence, and the life taken up again from confirmation or ordination, or commencement of preparation for it, or from the entrance upon community life or the like.
- (c) Then the daily life. We slipped into worldliness through not holding fast by God, and so we lost him. To grasp this is to understand how to escape from the world. The daily communing with God must be genuine, the daily devotion to his service real. It is not enough to examine one's daily life by a catalogue of sins; it should be examined by the claim of God upon my whole being.

Marvelling at God's Power

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"They marvelled, and glorified God which had given such power unto men."—S. Matt. ix. 8.

Picture: the scene.

Resolution: a short act in reparation of some defect realized in this meditation.

I.—*The multitude was moved by a right impulse.*

- (a) "Certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth." In so far as they were moved by zeal for the prerogative of God to forgive sins, their motive was right. But Jesus said, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" He saw that their motives were other than this. These scribes seemed to be contrasted with the multitudes, who praised God for what struck them as a marvel. Purity of motive alone enables us to lift up our hearts to God.
- (b) They were right in ascribing the power to God. Many would say, "What a clever man!" and would claim to human credit what equally with the divine prerogative of forgiveness of sins belongs to God. To-day many who misunderstand the Catholic faith, and are scandalized at the sacrament of penance, do not hesitate to withhold from him the glory, which is equally his, of other marvels.
- (c) They were right in praising God who had given such power unto men. Some do not think to praise God for his natural and intellectual gifts to themselves or to others. Indeed to praise God at all is not common among us; we more naturally turn our thoughts to him with complaint.

II.—*Some applications.*

- (a) Intelligence can marvel; it is intellectual dulness which never sees anything to wonder at. And it is spiritual dulness which never sees cause for marvel at that which God is habitually doing in our midst. Do you never marvel at his patience, his love, his power? Then praise him for such.
- (b) And praise God for his power given to men in skill and knowledge. Especially for the medical skill given to men, for the skill and patience of nurses. Pray for doctors, nurses and medical students that they may glorify God, and in marvelling at nature may not be blind to the controller of nature. Pray also for medical missions.
- (c) If we praise God for cure, and are not content with thanking the doctor, why not praise him for health? Which is the more marvellous, to escape from death in a sickness, or to be preserved in sound health year after year?

III.—*A sacramental interpretation.*

- (a) It is not the sign of a grovelling disposition, as some would suppose, to marvel at the sacraments of the Church. And those who are learning to marvel and to praise God for the wonders of the natural life are best preparing themselves to marvel at his miracles of grace, and not merely to offer the traditional respect which is due to subjects and services which are considered sacred.
- (b) And the sacraments are the highest examples of "such power unto men." If in the natural world of men he gives natural powers where he will, why in the supernatural world of men should we be surprised that he gives supernatural powers where he will? Deeper appreciation of the power of the sacraments will increase in us the disposition to pray, nothing doubting, whether in matters spiritual or material. Are my prayers addressed to one whom I treat as being able to remove mountains?
- (c) And glorify Almighty God for his sacramental gifts, not being afraid to do so by public testimony. Glorify him too by direct acts of thanksgiving; by devout and frequent application of them; by a strong belief in their efficacy; by a robust will to have their power manifested in your daily life; by a strong conviction that whatever progress is made in your life is due to Almighty God through the sacraments.

Walk not as other Gentiles Walk

NINETEENTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Walk not as other Gentiles walk."—Eph. iv. 17.

Picture: the Ephesian Christians contrasting themselves with their heathen neighbours.

Pray: for a spirit of gratitude that you have been called out of darkness.

I.—*S. Paul's description of non-Christian Gentiles.*

- (a) In the vanity of their minds. They lived in a world of their own making, and not in the real world of God. Absence of purpose was the characteristic feature. One may pass through the world as a vain show, taking it for the real substance. To understand life aright one must have the vision of truth as it has been shown in practical life in the human history of Jesus (see ver. 21).
- (b) With mind alienated from the life of God. Moral obliquity, emptiness of mind, leads to the loss of knowledge. The world at all points vibrates with the life of God, and life is in all its aspects a communing with him. Decay of the spiritual power of living follows upon vanity of mind. S. Paul has described it here as a loss of sensitiveness, a callousness which has lost the power of feeling (see vers. 18-19).
- (c) The further description of moral degradation (ver. 19) may or may not be manifested in individuals, but describes the state of society which has, first of all, substituted emptiness for reality, and then lost the exercise of its spiritual faculties. The description applies amply to the heathen world, partially—and entirely in principle—to non-Christian society anywhere. Pray earnestly and habitually for foreign missions. In England we cannot realize the pressure of heathen society.

II.—*Consider our calling.*

- (a) We have been called out of this, and yet only acquaintance with a heathen society can enable us to appreciate what is involved in the blessing of this call. We are too apt to regard Christianity as a personal affair, and to ignore the inestimable blessing of the Church and the heritage of a Christian society. In such a spirit of ignorance it is easy to belittle Christian missions in a heathen country.
- (b) And consider that we have been called, not according to our merit, but according to his goodwill and liberality. We can never adequately respond to the obligation laid on us by a Christian society. See to it that we are not indifferent to the responsibility, unmindful of the bounty, or selfishly regardless of those who are not thus privileged.
- (c) Consider that our own state of society presents also its discipline of life; the Church and the world are so confused that it is difficult to realize the distinction until we endeavour to respond to our call, and then comes the temptation to pessimism, or to selfishness. But the edifying of the body of Christ is the work of all Christians, according to the proper interpretation of ver. 12.

III.—*Consider the contrast.*

- (a) What thanksgiving for the call and all that is involved in it! Resolve to pay more attention to that duty, that you may the more apprehend its blessing, and rise to its responsibility. In this way is to be realized the duty not to walk as other Gentiles walk. We have lost the piquancy of the contrast in society which the readers of S. Paul's epistle realized.
- (b) Alas! that in spite of our heritage we must apply the words in our own day and country as S. Paul only by way of practical warning hinted at. It is the conversion of the converted which is required in the Church. Pray for those who have been called, and are yet worldly and indifferent; for careless Christians, as well as for non-Christians in England.
- (c) Consider our complacency. We assume our privileged position as a matter of course; S. Paul thought it a tremendous gift for himself and for others: he realized the contrast between Jewish and Gentile society, and yet the Church was to him another world from the Jewish society. He, too, had been rescued out of the *authority* of darkness (Col. i. 13). Pray for the conversion of the Jews, a consummation of the divine will, which S. Paul has declared to be dependent upon the fulness of the Gentiles (Rom. xi. 25-26).

Grieving the Holy Spirit

NINETEENTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God."—Eph. iv. 30.

Picture: the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost.

Resolve: to say one prayer at least daily to the Holy Ghost.

I.—*"Grieve not."*

- (a) The Holy Ghost is a person. You cannot grieve a thing. You can neglect, or misuse it; but it requires a person to be grieved or angered or loved or offended. Try to realize the person behind the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- (b) He is the Spirit of God, that is, he is God. Worship him; pray to him. The adoration of the Holy Ghost is very much neglected. And prayer is not often addressed to him directly. "O God the Holy Ghost, have mercy upon us miserable sinners."
- (c) The Holy Ghost loves us. You cannot grieve one who does not love. Consider the love of the Holy Ghost in his patience and perseverance with us in the work of grace. Enhance your perception of the love of God by regarding it as manifested in the office of each person of the Blessed Trinity: and confirm your faith in the Holy Trinity in unity by considering the one essence thus revealed in threefold relationship. A whole Trinity at work for the restoration of mankind.

II.—*The Holy Ghost is the bond of union.*

- (a) He is the love which unites eternally the Father and the Son, who proceeds from both essentially, and from the Father immediately as the source through the Son, who is eternally generated by the Father. The Holy Spirit compacts the communion or fellowship of the eternal Trinity.
- (b) He fulfils the same office to the Church: he unites her members into one spirit in the Body of Christ by the mystical begetting of God the Father. Thus the Church reproduces in manifestation the mystery of the eternal life.
- (c) The Holy Spirit is especially grieved by breaches of charity, which of necessity damage the unity of the body (see Eph. iv. 30-32). Such offences are peculiarly sins against the office and love of the Holy Ghost. St. Paul also illustrates from sins of impurity, because they are offences against the spirit of holiness (see verses 29 and 30). "Thirdly, I learn to believe in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God" (Catechism).

III.—*An aspect of sin.*

- (a) Sin is many things, and among others it is a vast ingratitude. Appreciate this, and under this thought consider such points as coldness and lack of devotion. God has done and ever does so much for us in his love and through his grace, that failure in response is a terrible indifference to him.
- (b) Consider sin under this aspect, and say to yourself that it matters very little if I damage myself, if I lose my life, if I go to hell. What really matters is that I should refuse God anything, that I should grieve such love as his, that I should despise such goodness to me, that I should try to frustrate his purposes.
- (c) And consider sin from its relationship to the Body. If one member suffer all the members suffer with it. Even private sin has this effect: no man liveth to himself. The Body is weakened in holiness by the sin of one member. Make acts of reparation to the Holy Ghost for neglect to reverence him: pray for grace to use aright the heavenly gifts which God sent upon his faithful people; and to use them aright is to use them to his honour and glory.

Importance of Night

NINETEENTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."—Acts xxiii. 11.

Picture: night as the interval, for review and the gathering of strength, between two days, during both of which we are on trial for Jesus Christ.

Resolve: to use to the best advantage my evening devotions.

I.—*"The night following."*

- (a) The day had not been altogether such as the apostle would look back upon with satisfaction. Under great provocation he had spoken unguardedly (ver. 3): in the stress of turmoil he had seized the occasion somewhat as an opportunist (ver. 6). And the nervous tension of the day might well make him unduly self-accusatory at night.
- (b) Plans were not apparently turning out well. He had followed advice in purifying himself with four men who had a vow, and this had led indirectly to his seizure (xxi. 20-30). It would be tempting to him to regret that he had listened to others, and to fret against circumstances.
- (c) His great hopes seemed in danger of disappointment. He had come to Jerusalem to fulfil a cherished hope of uniting Jewish and Gentile Christianity by the joint alms of his missionary Churches, and now misunderstanding seemed greater than before. He was looking forward, when this visit was over, to go to Rome, and so fulfil a long fixed purpose. And the future was entirely dark.

II.—*"The Lord stood by him."*

- (a) Reflect upon the divine consideration.

"There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given."

S. Paul, exhausted, will have seen self-accusation and disappointment. God's estimate is, "As thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem." The apostle had not been faithless; he had merely suffered from the limitations of human nature. Never was a time when S. Paul more needed this divine reassuring. Oh! that in our depression we may not shut out the divine visitation! How unlike is it to the servant's estimate, "I knew that thou wert an austere man"!

- (b) It made the night a preparation for the next day. By raising his spirits: by filling his heart with devout thankfulness to God, whose mercy endureth for ever: by lifting him up into hopefulness, seeing that after all he was to go to Rome. And the night vision illuminated the events of the next day, and the weary waiting which followed: the night journey to Caesarea, two years of waiting, a setting out to Rome delayed by a shipwreck.
- (c) Estimate aright the divine reward. "As . . . in Jerusalem, so . . . at Rome": the reward of faithful service is further service. Had S. Paul been serving God from low motives, the vision so far as it affected the future had very poor comfort. But it was not so: that God judged him worthy, and allowed him further witness, this was his reward.

III.—*Every night stands thus between two days.*

- (a) The words express a fact. The night following he stands by. There are dangers in the night arising from fatigue which slackens restraint, excites the nerves, and makes us easily depressed, over-sensitive, irritable. At the end of a day we are often more or less unfit for sound judgment: but the Lord stands by to guard and to watch. Is his presence expected, remembered, used?
- (b) The night follows a day, and prepares for a day. Each night should have its review and its preparation, at which the Lord stands by and speaks. The divine review of to-day will be also a preparation for to-morrow, by warning or encouragement. Look for his approval; throw yourself on his consideration; get strength from him.
- (c) Each night comes between two days in which you are bearing witness for him and during which you are to be advancing, however unlike it you may think, towards your eternal city. Each night, if you invite him to stand by, he will say, "Be of good cheer."

The Restorer: the Fulfiller

NINETEENTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*The image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*"—Col. i. 15 (R.V.).
"*To sum up all things in Christ.*"—Eph. i. 10 (R.V.).

Picture: the Son of Man seated in glory, clothed in light.

Pray: for a fuller vision of the new life.

I.—*The Transfiguration.*

- (a) In the Transfiguration the Incarnate Son was not temporarily changed; but for a moment of time he was revealed to chosen witnesses in his eternal glory, which the deep humility of the Incarnation veiled. This manifestation was made under suggestive conditions of time and circumstance. Of time, as he was beginning to unfold his passion; of circumstance, Moses and Elijah being of the company.
- (b) He is revealed, therefore, as the great Restorer and Fulfiller. Moses and Elijah stand for dispensations, he for eternity. Moses deals with the shadows of realities; he with the substance. Elijah is the local reformer and restorer (cp. S. Mark ix. 12); he is the perfect Restorer of all things as in the mind of God.
- (c) This is involved in the truth of the divine Word. All the life of creation has its source in the divine life, and in the externalizing in the sphere of time of the eternal interior communion of the Father and the Word. The Word is the Alpha and Omega. See also Eph. iii. 9-11.

II.—*The Restorer.*

- (a) In the Transfiguration scene we are forbidden to ignore the facts of life in a false optimism. He is the Restorer of that which is out of harmony. They spake on the mount of his Passion. Life is scattered, fragmentary, blurred, and damaged. Yet the darkness overcame not the light, but the light still shineth. See Acts iii. 21.
- (b) The Christian should remember that there is failure. He may not look out upon life as naturally disordered, a thing essentially apart from God; nor may he ignore the failure, whose basis of religion is redemption. But the disorder belongs to this age-world and has no part in that which is abiding, whose builder and maker is God.
- (c) He is first seen as the Restorer of individual life. Life in Christ at its highest is such a restoration of faculties, sympathies, will. And with this he is seen as the Restorer of society, for the individual is only taken up into him as he becomes a member of the Church. Consider that on the mount of Transfiguration is the fellowship of the saints.

III.—*The Fulfiller.*

- (a) Restoration leads up to fulfilment as regeneration restores the purpose, and fragmentariness passes into unity. In himself the Christ sums up all things according to their original destiny; as the second Adam he is the recapitulation of human life (Eph. i. 10). On the mount he was revealed in his inherent glory contrasted with the transient. In him hope is satisfied, and faith reassured, when we come down from the mount.
- (b) We need the assurance, who live in the midst of the process, in the Christian age (S. Matt. xix. 28). In the ruins we do not always see clearly the process of reconstruction; but we see him crowned with glory and honour, and we know that all live in him.
- (c) Amid the variety of life we are brought in the light of his revelation to see parts of the whole; fragmentariness implies unity. Amid the sorrows of life we are led to reflect both upon the ruin and the Passion, bringing the two truths into the dark mysteries of human experience. The true life seeks fellowship with the ruin through the following of the Passion.

One's Thoughts

NINETEENTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"And Jesus knowing their thoughts."—S. Matt. ix. 4.

Picture: Jesus Christ upon the cross.

Resolve: to examine my thoughts.

I.—*The scene in the gospel.*

- (a) Jesus Christ was moved here and always, not only by his deep sympathy with sickness but also by any evidence of sympathy in others, and by any sign of faith in himself. He knew the thoughts of those who brought the sick man to him, and he hastened to heal the palsied sufferer. It was nothing to him that there were limitations in their faith: they did what they could, and inasmuch as they did it unto the sick man he received it as done unto himself.
- (b) But also he perceived the thoughts of the scribes who were present, and when he said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," he knew that they were thinking that he had blasphemed. But observe his condescension to them; there was much to be said for their thoughts. God alone can forgive sins, and it honours God that any one should be jealous of his prerogatives.
- (c) So he assisted their faith, and did not condemn them. Was it not at the least partly for their sakes that he first forgave this man his sins rather than immediately healed him? If after having aroused the indignation of the scribes he should heal the man, they might think more of his claim to forgive sins, and of what it implied.

II.—*Upon the cross.*

- (a) What thoughts were his, as he perceived the thoughts of that surging crowd around Calvary? We know something of them in the first three words. There were the thoughts of those who knew not what they did; there were the thoughts of those who were turning wistful eyes to him; there were the thoughts of those who watched him with love and devotion.
- (b) And each one of these words went beyond those for or to whom they were immediately addressed. The first word covered many who were carried away by the estimate of him formed by the religious opinion of the day, and others who had received blessings from him, but who believed that their religion required that they should regard him as a bad man. And the second word stretched out to others who looked wistfully and enquiringly at the cross, wanting to believe, drawn to him but not knowing what to think. And the third word brought his message to the inner circle.
- (c) And from that scene turn to the eternal revelation, and learn something of the drawing power of his crucifixion, and of its world-wide charity.

III.—*Apply to self.*

- (a) The words have more than one application. Consider them first as a warning against false or mixed motives, against hypocrisy in any form, and also against sins of thought, whether of uncharity or of impurity, or of blasphemy and rebellion.
- (b) But apply also to perplexity, when one does not know what to think; or to misunderstanding and error, when one has meant rightly but done the wrong thing; or to doubt and difficulty, when the sincerest motives make one hesitate or hold back; or to the struggle to resist evil, when at last one is overcome; or to the temptation which is not sin because not consented to, but which causes great searching of heart because one is horrified to have found such a thought there.
- (c) And apply to good thoughts which have no opportunity of being carried out; to love which cannot express itself; to desires to serve him much, when one's opportunity seems only to permit us to serve him a little; to sympathy with others although one can do nothing.

The Face of Jesus Christ

NINETEENTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Seek ye my face. . . Thy face, Lord, will I seek."—Ps. xxvii. 8.

Picture: the face of Jesus Christ.

Resolve: renewal of purpose.

I.—*The face of God.*

- (a) The face is the key to the interpretation of a person's inner being: it is his illumination. The face is the glory of a person, for the glory is the effulgence of light, and through the face shines the light that is in him. It was said of S. Paul that at times he looked like a man, and at times he had the face of an angel (Acts of Thekla), and of S. Stephen that men, in the crisis of his life, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.
- (b) In the Old Testament the face of God is a frequent symbol. The high priest's blessing is based upon it (Numb. vi. 24 ff.): in the Psalms there is continual reference to it (e.g. Ps. lxvii. 1 ref.). Moses could not see the face of God (Exod. xxxiii. 20), but the angels see it (S. Matt. xviii. 10), and the saints in glory (Apoc. xxii. 3 f.).
- (c) Two great stretches of truth combine in this symbol. There is revelation: the face of God expresses open vision, and the glory of God is manifested therein. There is also holiness: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (and see Heb. xii. 14). They are in reality only two aspects of one truth; for only the single in heart can receive the divine revelation, and the glory of God expresses in unity his blaze of righteousness and his penetrating illumination of love and wisdom.

II.—*The face of Jesus Christ* (2 Cor. iv. 6).

- (a) It is a wonderful study of human nature. Commence by seeing in him the likeness of his mother; then search for the reflection of his human history, the experience of unalloyed love, the majesty of unstained life, the discipline of conflict. Look farther for the revelation of man in the Son of Man.
- (b) Examine the face of Jesus Christ in the crisis of his life, so far as you have power to read therein the interpretation of your own questionings. See him in the wilderness in the temptation; see him in the agony in the garden; see him lifted up on the cross. Look into his face, and behold the glory of God upon human life and its problems. Be not afraid, though it make you weep bitterly: remember how the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.
- (c) Then strive to grasp the truth which is being forced upon you that through this face shines, veiled in our humanity, the glory of God. There is no need to change the scenes to the Transfiguration, Resurrection, and Ascension; the face is one, the revelation is one: in him man gazes with unveiled face upon the glory which gradually transfigures him with a glory which is not passing away (2 Cor. iii. 18; and compare verse 13, R.V.).

III.—*"Thy face, Lord, will I seek."*

- (a) The versicle and its response have found their solution in the transfiguring grace of Jesus Christ. In him all life becomes an unveiling of the face of God, as he interprets it to those who seek in him the way, the truth, and the life for themselves. In him one looks out upon life to seek the face of God in every experience and in each individual.
- (b) This response gives at once the purpose and the consummation of life. It is like unto the angels who go forth from the divine presence, and to the blessed ones, who serve him untiringly, unflinchingly, because they see his face without distraction, without the disfigurement of blurred vision. In the face of Jesus Christ renew this purpose.
- (c) The words suggest thoughts of the character of that personal fellowship between the disciple and his Master, without which we cannot emulate the holy angels, and through which we penetrate into the vision of God, wherein service is illuminated by prayer and meditation, and freedom of speech is interpreted in action.

Christians and Foreign Missions

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Go ye therefore into the highways."—S. Matt. xxii. 9.

Picture: the eagerness of the king's servants.

Resolve: some point of evangelistic zeal.

I.—*The unity of the parable.*

- (a) There is first the historical interpretation which was perceived by the hearers. The Jews had been called, and Jesus Christ's criticism was that they carelessly despised or violently rejected. It was an open declaration that he knew their intentions (S. Matt. xxi. 45, 46), and a strong attack on them as the children of those who had killed the prophets.
- (b) Then, as an inherent part of the parable, is the open invitation to the Gentiles, who were spiritually in the highways. So far the parable is similar to that of "The vineyard." And in both parables there is the implication that the Gentiles will accept (xxii. 10; cp. xxi. 41).
- (c) But now there is added another element, and "The man that had not on the wedding garment" is often regarded as loosely attached to the parable of "The marriage of the king's son." But the main lesson is the unity of God's dealings with man. So the parable does not end with the implied acceptance of the Gentiles, of whom both bad and good are called; but by a typical example he shows that the Gentiles who treat the invitation disrespectfully will likewise be rejected, and enforces the truth by the final verdict (ver. 14).

II.—*The character of the king.*

- (a) This unity of the parable directs one's mind to a study of the king. He desires to have the house filled for his son's marriage feast. Consider here the divine devotion to the Church as the sphere of the Son's glory; and yet further the spirit of hospitality and the desire of human fellowship which are ascribed to the heavenly King. Jesus Christ is manifesting in these words the heart of God: He loves the world of men.
- (b) This desire of the heart of God is checked by the human spirit of careless indifference and inappreciation, and even by violent resistance. I ought to be at one with him in this desire, and therefore concerned about the indifference and open rebellion which are manifested on all sides.
- (c) Yet the heart of the Almighty is not turned against man by reason of this lack of general response. He is stirred rather to fresh appeal. The condescension of the King in gathering in from the highways is fitly followed by his desire to come in and see them—truly our fellowship is with the Father. Nor does he repent of his liberality, or turn against the other guests, when he finds himself insulted.

III.—*A present application.*

- (a) Consider whether the Gentile Christians have not taken the place of the Jews. There is an extraordinary and contemptuous indifference, often turning to violence, if men are urged to fulfil the obligations which lie upon them. They were his chosen people; we are of the highways.
- (b) We assume without warrant that Christianity, which is built upon an oriental foundation, is really pre-eminently western; hence we cannot think seriously of a Christianity which may die out of the world of white men, and be offered to the coloured races who are now in the highways. But what if the missionary zeal of to-day be a calling of them in, because we are not worthy!
- (c) We know the mind of God as seen in this parable. It should be our mind also. If we are his servants we must share in this readiness to fill the house with guests. Picture the scene of a servant who does not believe in foreign missions, explaining to the Master that he has not agreed with him in calling in the men of the highways!

A Rule of Life

TWENTIETH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"See then that ye walk circumspectly." *"Look therefore carefully how ye walk."*—Eph. v. 15 (A.V. and R.V.).

Picture: life as a journey.

Resolve: to consider my rule of life.

I.—*The symbolism of walking.*

- (a) To treat life as a journey is a symbol of almost universal application and by no means peculiarly Christian. It suggests a "whence?" and a "whither?" and forces the mind to consider that there is an end to it. We are conscious too that one man's journey is longer than another's, and that no one knows when his own will end.
- (b) Walking, if considered, adds various considerations. It implies purpose, and the making progress. It is a steady exercise, regularly persevered in. One contrasts therein the sobriety of age with the gambolling of children. Mark further that it is a healthy exercise, tending to make the frame robust; and that when vitality is weak one wearies of walking.
- (c) S. Paul urges that one should see to it how one is walking. The really steady walker walks briskly and well, and yet almost unconsciously; but he is promptly aware if he begin to walk badly, and he pulls himself up. He is taking care how he walks, even while he does not notice that he is paying attention to it.

II.—*"How ye walk."*

- (a) Some fall in their walking. It may be through ignorance. The infant falls from weakness and inexperience. The life needs training before it can go on as it were unconsciously. Some fall through carelessness, as the giddy boy who will not look where he is going. Sometimes such thoughtlessness has produced a life-long deformity, and at others an accident from which it takes years to recover. How patient and gentle we should be with such cases!
- (b) Others fall more glaringly through their own fault. The drunkard is a special case of this. Begun perhaps in ignorance or carelessness, he has allowed himself to be overcome by habit. Or, if a man choose to walk in the dark he cannot blame circumstance if he fall.
- (c) No need to think only of such cases. Walking always has its dangers. Yet in the light of these dangers, nervousness only increases the risk, as all have experienced in crowded thoroughfares. Life is indeed beset by snares, but a timid Christian is the worst prepared.

III.—*"Look therefore carefully."*

- (a) "Therefore"—because ye are children of the light and of the day (cf. ver. 8). Therefore—because of corruption within (vers. 3 and 5), evil persuasions and arguments from within and without (ver. 6), evil examples and surroundings (vers. 7 and 11). The walk of life needs not only to be steady and experienced by practice, but also to be soberly watchful.
- (b) "Look carefully." The A.V. has "walk circumspectly" which is not a very happy simile, suggesting rather a certain fastidious daintiness and a self-centred care of one's person lest it should be spotted by mud. S. Paul wrote "accurately," i.e. scientifically, not as foolish but as wise. It is not sufficient not to know or not to think, when one should know or think.
- (c) And his word implies a spirit of recollectedness, a watchfulness over one's walk. "Look therefore how ye are walking accurately." It is in harmony with this advice that the devout Christian makes a rule of life for himself. By these rules he will from time to time examine himself, as a stranger will take his bearings to see if he is continuing in the right direction.

Life's Opportunities

TWENTIETH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*Redeeming the time.*"—Eph. v. 16 (and see R.V. marg.).

Picture: the wise merchant who buys up with a view to the future.

Resolve: to view life *sub specie eternitatis*.

I.—*The simile.*

- (a) The word suggests a false simile, that of buying back lost years by the good use of the time to come. It is a grave reflection that one cannot do this. In this sense the word *redeem* is more fitly reserved for the mystery of the Redeemer's work, although in some way there is truth here in the mystery of grace, in which he may restore to us the years which the palmerworm hath eaten.
- (b) But the other force of the word is to *buy up*, rather than *buy back*. It is the thought of making the most of one's opportunity. It was what S. Paul did; evangelistic work in prison: tent-making combined with instruction; full use made of all his social and personal advantages. It is what a greater than S. Paul did in the house of Simon (S. Luke vii. 36-49), after feeding the 5000 (S. John vi. 16-21, and 22 ff.), with the woman of Samaria, etc.
- (c) And *time* should rather be rendered by opportunity or occasion. A paraphrase of the passage is, "See then that you walk accurately, buying up for yourselves out of the undefined opportunities of life that which a less scientific walking would allow to be lost."

II.—*Some considerations.*

- (a) A very simple application is that of buying up for one's self available time for devotional study and prayer. There is a great deal of work which must be done; and there is much which calls for being done. Unless each opportunity is bought up as it comes, the priest's study is neglected, as he would say, necessarily: the Bible is only ransacked for sermons; prayer becomes the essential minimum.
- (b) To buy up opportunities of good requires more than alertness and tact. Many misuse the opportunity, floundering in clumsily where Almighty God does not make the way. Many never see it, because life is not seen in the vision of God. But there are those who are always bright in the light of God, and to whom he presents opportunities which they can see, just because they are living in eternity (ver. 18 f.).
- (c) This thought of eternity belongs to the simile. Like a wise merchant he buys up in the evil days, knowing of days which are not evil, and having a sounder estimate of worth than the man who does not see in the light of eternity. The word *evil* may be regarded as used comparatively.

III.—*The spirit of this buying up.*

- (a) S. Paul says, "Buy up for yourselves," not with the calculation of crude selfishness, but rather with the thought of the travelling merchant who passes through on his way to his own country, and buys up what others let slip by. The thought rather emphasizes the identity of interest between the Christian and Almighty God's purposes: he is on the side of God in an alien world, and the opportunities are for his service.
- (b) So it is the spirit of foresight and insight on the part of him who knows the mind of God (ver. 17), and who, instead of being filled with the excitement of natural life, is sustained by a divine spirit which causes him to make melody in his heart to the Lord, in whose service he is travelling through life with wisdom and alertness (ver. 18 f.).
- (c) Has S. Paul passed from the simile when he writes of submission? Not necessarily. As the merchant must walk accurately, so, too, in this merchandise he must learn to be the servant of all if he is to seize or even to see the opportunity. Like his Master, he must not come to be ministered unto, but to minister. Like S. Paul, he does not seek glory of men (1 Thess. ii. 6), reckoning rather in his merchandise the kingdom and the glory to be revealed (1 Thess. ii. 12, and cp. doxology to the Lord's Prayer).

The Holy Spirit in the Individual

TWENTIETH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Be filled with the Spirit."—Eph. v. 18.

Picture: The wind blowing upon the reeds and producing harmonious tones.

Resolve: to desire more seriously the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially—

I.—*Consider the fitness of the Holy Spirit for his work of giving spiritual tone.*

- (a) He is the bond of union between the Father and the Son, and we cannot be related to them except through him; as also we must look to him for power to fulfil the conditions of fellowship with the Father and the Son. Consider one or two of these conditions, in which the Holy Spirit will enable us: "Love your enemies . . . that ye may be the children of your Father." "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie." "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed."
- (b) His personal love to us. As his peculiar relationship within the Trinity is love, so also is he manifested to us in the exercise of love. It is the essence of love that it passes out beyond one's self, and it is therefore a relationship between the Father and the Son, of which the Spirit is the bond of union. So S. Paul marks love as the first-fruit of the Spirit.
- (c) His office towards us of direction. The Holy Spirit guides us. To say that spirituality is the Christian's tone is to imply this training by the Holy Spirit; yet we often deceive ourselves, and pervert spirituality into an emotion or ~~an~~ affectation. It is just that which is "by the Holy Ghost," and not by good impulses and desires: it is the effect produced by the fulfilment of his office toward the individual in guiding the springs of his life: he is to "rule in your hearts."

II.—*Consider the need of his operations within us.*

- (a) Because of the evil that is in the world. The world, unrefreshed by the sanctifying dew of the Holy Spirit, is a barren land for the Christian to find nourishment in (see Ps. lxxiii. 1-3). Let us be joyful in God that it is so, instead of complaining: let us humble ourselves by reflecting upon our readiness to feed upon husks.
- (b) Because of our own natural dryness. We have often made discovery of this only to be depressed by it, without seeing that the discovery was an invitation of God to be filled with the Spirit that we may sing and make melody to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things (Eph. v. 18 20). In proportion as the Holy Spirit refreshes the heart, just so far have we true unction towards God, to whom we can only offer what the Holy Spirit gives us.
- (c) Because without him the Christian life is a depressing burden of unattainable aspirations. The Holy Spirit is the cheerfulness of spirituality (Eph. v. 19), the giver of that elevation of spirit which should mark the Christian's life. Sorrowful it may be, for many reasons, yet always rejoicing. It is within ourselves that we are straitened: in him is all the fulness of God.

III.—*Consider his work in the heart.*

- (a) He is the active force of all holiness, the mover and invigorator of the heart. We often lament the coldness of our hearts, the dulness of our aspirations, the lowness of our spiritual ambitions, our little interest in prayer and worship, when we might more profitably remember that these things are not of ourselves, but are to be had of him.
- (b) He is the author of inspired Christian emotions. Seek not to conjure up emotions, and thereby be deceived: the only truly Christian emotions are those which are the evidence of his work within the heart. He is to be our love, fire, comforter, unction, dew.
- (c) He is prepared to make us his instruments to others. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive."

Single-mindedness

TWENTIETH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."—2 Chron. xvi. 9.

Consider: the simile of the eyes of God, taking in all things in their survey.

Resolve: to be whole-hearted with God.

I.—*Consider the simile.*

- (a) The chronicler has borrowed it from Zechariah (iv. 10; cp. iii. 9). The eyes of God were fixed with pleasure on the rebuilding of the Temple, an encouragement for the future in the day of small things. And the same eyes run to and fro through the whole earth; the building of the Temple is not an isolated work, but is related to the world movements which are under his control. Seven is the number of perfection.
- (b) In the words of the chronicler the application is again to the beholding in providential survey. He searches out the single-minded, that he may help him. How much more profitable is this association of idea with the seven eyes of God than that of the fear of detection which is frequently associated with the words "Thou God seest me," in violence to their context!
- (c) Thus the passages in Zechariah and Chronicles suggest together the perfection of the divine survey, which embraces alike the whole world and the individual. Amid the perplexities of life in the Catholic Church, do not forget the seven eyes fixed on its building, and you will keep faith in God though Zerubbabel disappoint. Also never think yourself forgotten by him, who scans the whole earth on behalf of his loyal servant.

II.—*Asa.*

- (a) Asa called in the stranger against his own flesh and blood. When Ahaz turned to Assyria against the foreign Syrian, Isaiah disapproved. Obadiah felt bitterly that the Edomites had rejoiced at the destruction of their brethren the Israelites (Obad. 10). While the book of Kings makes no comment on Asa's conduct (1 Kings xv. 11, 14), the Chronicles disapproved. It is never easy to see the fault of which one's own age approves, or which seems to be justified by its success.
- (b) Yet, in truth, Asa started Judah on the fatal policy of foreign alliance, and the nation was to prove at last that self-chosen ways always lead to disaster. But it requires often a long vision to see the justification of God's will; he does not reckon time as we do.
- (c) Perhaps the record which is incorporated in the book of Kings was blinded to the character of Asa's conduct because he was a good man; the later book of Chronicles can judge more truly. History reverses many a judgment, and at the moment it is easy to think that a line of conduct is right because good men approve of it.

III.—*Single-mindedness.*

- (a) Asa's perfect heart has no reference to sinlessness, but to single-mindedness. It is the purpose, strongly formed, not to act against the will of God. Nothing is more pleasing to him than one who is thus whole-hearted towards him, and he deals gently with many a fault in such, which springs from error of judgment or human weakness of faith, or the limits of human vision.
- (b) The single-minded does not find God's will a burden to be undertaken; it is to him the best and most desirable end. And one who retains his single-mindedness of purpose God will save from sacrificing an ultimate good for an immediate gain.
- (c) And the whole-hearted, though he make many mistakes, may be assured of the seven eyes upon him, to show himself strong on his behalf. The double-minded is unstable: the single-minded is supported by the stability of God.

The Finished Work of Christ

TWENTIETH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

“*It is finished.*”—S. John xix. 30.

Picture: the Crucifixion—the bowing of his head.

Resolve: to make frequent acts of faith in the finished work of Christ.

I.—*The word on the cross.*

- (a) For three hours has been the mysterious darkness; nature in sympathy with the work of the redemption of creation by him through whom the worlds were made. The mystery of that last great strife of sin-bearing is hidden from us by reason of our imperfection of human life, but yet also by reason of our inability to follow the experience of his divine person. One word, which we reverently receive but cannot fathom, has been the revelation to us: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” But now it is finished.
- (b) The physical, moral, and spiritual trials of his human life are finished. Henceforth he is delivered from the strife of tongues. The word expresses all that he has endured while men have tried to accommodate him to their standard and ideas, and have denounced him because he would not be tempted. It expresses all that he has borne with from those who tried to follow him, but were straitened in themselves.
- (c) The limitation of his human condition is finished. He is man for evermore since the angel appeared to Mary; but he has ended the experience of those conditions which belong to this first stage of man's life, before this mortal has put on immortality, and this body which was sown a natural body has been raised a spiritual body.

II.—*His work.*

- (a) The work which had been given him to do, which he had regarded and reverently followed as the true Son in obedience to his Father, is now ended. It was that work which, accomplished under the limited conditions of life, had shared the conditions of failure which are incidental to the present stage of life.
- (b) But this work was now finished, and not merely brought to an end. “I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do.” Before he gave up the ghost he returned to the Father the account of his mission.
- (c) And now he was to enter upon the work of victory. He had overcome the world; henceforth he was to live as conqueror. Triumphant over death and hades, he was to pass through the resurrection to sit at the right hand of God, expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

III.—*The finished work of Christ.*

- (a) Man's effort is ever after accomplishing his own salvation. Even when he has learned to throw himself upon God for the initial forgiveness of his sins through the merits of Jesus Christ, he often for a long time trusts largely to his own efforts at amendment, and regards his life as in his own hands to make the right use of. His one rule of life is that he is a Christian and must behave as such; and for many years it may be that he is satisfied that he is doing so.
- (b) But where grace prevails there grows a much deeper trust in the finished work of Christ: the Christian becomes increasingly conscious that the work going on within him is all of God, that it is himself who is the main obstacle to his progress, that even his best efforts need to be washed in the precious Blood, that sin is so deep-seated in him that he dare not appear before the judgment seat of God except he be clothed with Christ's righteousness.
- (c) The finished work of Christ is not by such a one misunderstood. He neither believes that he needs nothing but forgiveness, nor does he neglect the grace of Jesus Christ, who as Head of his Church nourishes his members day by day. But he does increasingly realize the uttermost need of his life to be that Christ died for him.

The Desire of Jesus for us

TWENTIETH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.*"—Song of Sol. vii. 10.

Picture: the desire of God for me as manifested in his invitation to the Blessed Sacrament.

Resolve: to correspond to this desire by frequent communion.

I.—*The desire of God for us.*

- (a) Consider our selfishness in communion, thinking much more of our benefit than of our response to the great love of God. Even in the Old Testament it was said that he stretched forth his hands imploringly to his chosen people (Isa. lxv. 2). How much more so now in the Blessed Sacrament!
- (b) The desire of God for me is most fully satisfied through the Incarnation, wherein he communicates with us personally and spiritually; in the gift of the beloved Son he withholds nothing. In Baptism the individual is personally united with him who is the only-begotten God; we are made partakers of the divine nature, and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son.
- (c) The Sacrament of the Altar is the appointed means for the fullest satisfaction of this divine desire. "*My Father* giveth you the true bread from heaven." The communion is not merely the gift of grace, but of the Giver of all grace. God gave his Son to the suffering of death that he might receive the satisfaction of our communion with himself through him.

II.—*God's desire and our desire.*

- (a) To this desire it is the part of the Christian to respond, preparing himself to enter the divine banqueting-hall (Cant. ii. 4). By regarding the divine desire he will find a great incentive to devout and carefully prepared communion; he will do his best to satisfy God's desire.
- (b) This desire should find within us a corresponding desire. This is to be one of the fruits of good communions. When we look for sensible benefits we shall suffer many disappointments, for we are not estimating aright the Blessed Sacrament; but when we communicate to fulfil his will, the singleness of our intention will be the condition of unalloyed blessing. "*My beloved is mine and I am his*" (Cant. ii. 16).
- (c) We cannot expect to desire him much if we communicate rarely, selfishly, or indifferently. Consider that the Blessed Sacrament is the personal bestowal of Jesus Christ himself, body and soul, humanity and divinity, who said, "*With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you.*" Consider therefore the importance of increased attention to worship in the Blessed Sacrament, wherein he bestows himself upon us in unbounded love.

III.—*Frequent Communion.*

- (a) Some feel unworthy of more frequent communion, who forget that by the grace there given they will be nourished to communicate less unworthily. Communion is not only the privilege of the faithful; it is a means of grace, the food of the wayfaring man. Be encouraged to bring your own unworthiness to him by the liberality with which he stretches forth his hands to you.
- (b) The desire of God for us makes indeed a great demand upon the Christian life. To respond to his desire is a great incentive to better preparation and more earnest thanksgiving. Cannot I give him these attentions? As the communicant advances he must strive after more frequent communion: some are niggardly, as though they doubted God's liberality, neglecting even the very crown of a Holy Day unless it happen to be their "day" for communion. Why refuse to God's love the gift of an extra communion devoutly prepared?
- (c) This truth calls for a corresponding elevation of the whole life. I am the object of God's love: he desires to pour forth his benefits upon me. All my life should be a continuous round of preparation and thanksgiving for communion, as all my life is held up in the communion which his love bestows.

Seeking a Sign

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."—S. John iv. 48.

Consider: the miracles of grace.

Pray: for a strong faith in Almighty God.

I.—*The discrimination of Almighty God.*

- (a) He does not treat us all alike, but studies each one of us, and acts according to our personal condition. He did not go with the nobleman, for he could raise him to greater height through the trial of his faith. He saw the possibility, and did not lose the opportunity by conceding to his present limitation. In our dealings with men we often fail from courage to dare, remaining easily satisfied, and indeed grateful for a meagre attainment.
- (b) But in a similar case he essayed to go, and thereby called forth a surprising answer (S. Matt. viii. 8 f.). We should learn to trust such discrimination as being for our good, seeing that it is exercised by one who knows our frame. Thus we must strive to rise above the littleness of human judgment, which is prone to attempt to dictate terms to Almighty God.
- (c) On a later occasion, when men asked for a sign, he refused altogether to give it, lest men should treat religion materially, by subjecting it to tests which are only appropriate to another sphere of life. We ourselves fall into this error when, ignoring the signs proper to the Christian revelation, we seek to *prove* it by criticism and by historical evidence.

II.—*The Christian's condition.*

- (a) It is not surprising that the nobleman required the visible presence of the new teacher, who so far had only performed one miracle. His faith was great when he appealed to him to come down to heal his boy. It was not contrary to experience, as men judged, that miracles should be done, but only that they should be wrought at a distance.
- (b) But in the Christian religion, it is not a new thing to these later ages to believe that Jesus Christ is personally present under the sacramental forms, although we do not see him. Yet for some centuries men have disbelieved the sacramental mysteries, and sceptically demand a sign, without which they will not believe. Yet neither do they expect the sign, nor do they realize that here there cannot be a sign except to those who believe, and who live upon the sacraments.
- (c) And how soon do we seek a sign, demanding visible answer to prayer, sensible experience in grace! But as he who lives in vice or selfishness is ignorant of the life and happiness of innocence and unselfishness, so the material life does not conceive of another type of life which to the spiritual man is thoroughly real. Hence miracle may be granted to confirm faith, but not otherwise.

III.—*Seeking a sign.*

- (a) Some asked at times out of an evil heart. To such no proof is given (S. Matt. xvi. 1 ff.). It would be the ruin of Christianity if the world believed in the sacraments; it would patronise Christianity. But to him who cries out, "Come down," Jesus Christ acts with the sacraments as he did to the nobleman; and those who believe him see the proof of his miraculous power in the fruits of the sacramental life.
- (b) Again and again he is limited in the exercise of his power by the lack of faith. "He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." That is why so many use the sacraments, and are very little bettered by them. They do not expect benefit, and they have not therefore the reverence and devotion of faith. To them sacraments are forms.
- (c) But the sign is there: it is himself, in power, manifested in converted lives which out of weakness have been made strong, in lives which change from careless and selfish standards to delicacy of spiritual perception, and from material views to a realization of the kingdom of heaven.

Put on, so as to stand

TWENTY-FIRST MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."—Eph. vi. 11.

Picture: an armed knight of God.

Pray: for daily Christian perseverance.

I.—*The armour of God.*

- (a) The armour is the complete outfit, not one part of it only. The "whole armour" is the "panoply" in Greek, and the word "whole" is in reality redundant. There can be no half measures of preparation; such is not the way the saints were victorious.
- (b) The armour of God—the divine panoply. Stress is laid upon this rather than upon the word "whole." Many are willing to put on armour, but not God's. They will defend themselves in their own armour. And for spiritual warfare the armour must be spiritual: no material armour will avail against temptation. The saints never trusted to their good deeds, their regular habits or their pious practices.
- (c) The armour is that which in the O.T. is used of the divine Warrior, and the Davidic king. See Isa. lix. 17 ff.; xi. 4 ff.; and cf. Wisd. v. 17 ff. S. Paul has not shrunk from appropriating the armour of the Messianic figure to the new man in Christ. It is a bold application of the truth that ye are in "Christ," and in him "more than conquerors," as the saints have found.

II.—*"The wiles of the devil."*

- (a) He is full of wiles, crafty and scheming. It suggests his slyness and resourcefulness, rather than his violence. Yet he is not omnipotent. The divine warrior must, however, be always watchful. He is not always being attacked; but there comes to the unwary an evil day (see ver. 13) when he is caught off-guard by some sly attack; as Sardis, an almost impregnable city, was seized by night, because, relying upon its strong position, its guard was neglectful.
- (b) It is dangerous ever to think, "I am strong now." To have defeated him on one field is only to expect an attack elsewhere, less open and planned with more guile. This has always been the experience of the saints; they knew nothing of a time upon earth in which they were free from snares; and they found his spiritual snares far more serious than his material ones.
- (c) Thus, clad in God's armour, they nevertheless watched at all times. They neither despised the enemy, nor did they weakly fear him, as distrusting God's armour. They recognized that life is a warfare; not merely a self-development and soul-culture.

III.—*Put on—so as to stand.*

- (a) The Christian is not a merely passive agent. To some extent we are all inclined to expect Almighty God to do for us what we should do for ourselves. The armour is provided, but we must put it on, as well as be watchful. How defencelessly many Christians watch! The saints were always watchful, among other things that they had their panoply on—sacramental grace, faith, a strong hope, devotional contemplation, etc.
- (b) "To stand against." We are on Christian ground: Satan would tempt us off it, as otherwise he fights at great disadvantage. Why assist him by going off the ground? To "stand against" suggests a further thought than watchfulness: it implies sturdiness to hold one's ground. There is no room for weakness or compromise.
- (c) S. Paul writes with confidence of the issue, and yet does not suppress either the seriousness of the attack or the possibility of defeat. Only—defeat need not be. And that there will not be defeat is assured to us by the saints, if only the warrior, clad in the divine armour, is watchful and firm-standing.

Strong in the Lord

TWENTY-FIRST TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."—Eph. vi. 10.

Picture: the Christian knight in armour, keeping vigil.

Resolve: "When I am weak then am I strong."

I.—"Be strong."

- (a) We admire strength: rightly so. Look into the matter and satisfy yourself that you admire it rightly. God meant us to be strong, who made our bodies as well as our souls. "I believe . . . the resurrection of the body." Cultivate a strong body that you may be the better equipped for the divine service. Glorify God in your body.
- (b) There is a rarer and a higher strength—moral strength: strength of will and character. Cultivate it; the lack of moral character accounts for the low tone of social morality. There is great need to exercise this strength in the world, and it is not least needed in the society of those whose tone is not bad but is merely easy-going and comfortably self-satisfied.
- (c) There is a still higher strength—the supernatural strength of grace. By it the weak bodied have often done marvels of bravery, and the timid have defied the public opinion of their set, and a child has knelt to pray under laughter, or refused to lie because God saw him. The great blot on our Christianity is its feebleness. Pray for all Christians striving to be brave under opposition.

II.—"Be strong in the Lord."

- (a) Strength of will requires cautious dealing. It is a good thing, but easily abused. A man who is strong, and not led by others by the nose, has a great temptation to the pride of influence and leadership: and pride ruins souls. He knows what he is doing, and justifies it to himself, because he does nothing feebly: pride of strength has blinded him to what others see in him.
- (b) Such natural strength of character often stops short of religion. A strong will and a sound standard of morals satisfy him. No one can make him do what he believes to be wrong, and he is quite able to keep himself straight. To such an one the words apply "Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward": his reward is a sound body, a satisfied mind, the esteem of men. But religion is the state of the man before God, and not just his good conduct. The heathen aimed at self-sufficiency: the Christian's sufficiency is of God.
- (c) Strength of character must be in the Lord, by whom it will be rightly directed, who will defend from pride and self-sufficiency, who will blend gentleness and humility with strength. Blessed is he who hath grace to pray: "Lord, save me from my strength." It is the strong man who has to learn that "When I am weak, then am I strong."

III.—"And in the power of his might."

- (a) Reflect upon your own weakness. Find out by probing. Are you strong, physically, intellectually, morally? Is that all? Suppose we add, spiritually? or—are you strong in the Lord, or only in self-will and independence? Then a third question—Are you strong in the power of his might—strong in forgiveness, sympathy with the weak, gentleness, humility, etc.? Are you strong in the fear of offending God, and in contrition?
- (b) The progress of the life of grace is the experimental discovery of the divine strength. What I have tried to do and failed, he is now doing since I put myself in his hands and gave up self-management. And, farther, he is being found strong enough to break me down as I never thought to be broken. *Laus Deo.*
- (c) Grace is the armour with which the Christian knight is girt, and whereby he is able to stand (vers. 11, 13). Hardest of all is that: Having done all, shall I stand? He who is learning to stand by grace is discovering that perseverance itself is a gift of God.

Perseverance

TWENTY-FIRST WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."—
Eph. vi. 18.

Picture : the armed knight at prayer.

Resolve : watch and pray.

I.—*The spiritual knight.*

- (a) The context is important. Life and prayer react upon each other, and are inseparable. The man of God, completed with the divine armour, stands on the alert. There is no pretence that if he watch, the enemy will not dare to attack; there will be the evil day, *i.e.* the day of special temptation. And happy is the man who can pass through this successfully, and still stand prepared, knowing that there will be another attack.
- (b) This is the man who is to pray always, and to pray in the spirit, and to watch unto this matter of prayer, with perseverance in it. The same steadiness is to be exercised here as in the matter of watching against the enemy. He is not only to pray when he is disposed to do so; just as he is not only to stand on guard when so inclined. The more he watches the more he will know the need of prayer, and *vice versa*.
- (c) And he is to use supplication for all saints. The warrior does not stand alone, and must not let himself think that he is alone. Others support him by their watchful conduct. And so, too, he must pray for them, as fellow warriors.

II.—*Perseverance in prayer.*

- (a) It should not surprise me that prayer is difficult to persevere in. One's desires need to be raised so that one may get on to the height on which one can talk with God. Prayer represents man at his highest, if it be the prayer of the warrior. The Son of Man prayed in an agony (S. Luke xxii. 44).
- (b) How easy is much of my prayer, only wearying because I cannot fix my attention, and because I am bothered to get through all these obligations! But the man who watches thereunto with all perseverance has another strain than this; the strain to get into vital and personal communication with him, who is only to be truly found by those who seek, and know the search to be worth effort, to call for more perseverance as he seems to be hiding himself that one may aspire the more. "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God."
- (c) What perseverance, and watching unto this matter of prayer, before one can attune the heart to God! It is a slow discipline, because what he waits to give cannot be received easily. He is ready, but the recruit cannot receive. It may take years well spent before one can calm the restless heart in prayer, curb the will by prayer when it is rebellious, persevere in prayer until one can come away knowing that one has met him and heard his voice.

III.—*Thoughts on perseverance.*

- (a) Do I not sometimes find that there is nothing to say? If I want to ask for something, or to pray for forgiveness, it does not take me long. I do not find it useful to repeat long prayers from a book, and I soon find that the use of psalms with special intention becomes unreal. How far is this so because I have not learnt to pray, but only to say prayers for so long a time?
- (b) Prayer, to be thoroughly acquired, needs preparation. I will not rush headlong into speech, but will take time to realize the presence, to be ready to address the person, to know who and what sort of person it is that is about to address him, to be sure that it is I myself, as I actually am, who am going to speak. I wonder what discipline in prayer the psalmist experienced, who said, "O Lord! thou hast searched me out and known me."
- (c) And intercession has its difficulties, too. I recognize the duty, but it is irksome. Here the sympathy of the fellow-warrior should help, if I give any attention to the strife of my brethren, if I take any interest in them. And one reward of perseverance in prayer will be the desire to pray for others, and unselfishness in prayer will be a great education in rising to greater heights.

Faith as a Shield

TWENTY-FIRST THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."—Eph. vi. 16.

Picture: the soldier of Christ, alert, having taken up the great covering shield, which can resist even combustible darts.

Resolve: have faith in God.

I.—*The Roman soldier had faith.*

- (a) In his country. There was the great fact of the Empire, and its far-reaching power, behind the individual soldier of the provinces; and this nerved him. He felt that as a Roman soldier he was safe: and if slain in battle his death would be amply avenged. Behind the faith of the Christian there must be "the faith"—the rule of Christ. The Christian is confident in the Holy Catholic Church.
- (b) In his weapon. He was armed with the most efficient defence, and supplied with the best weapons, and he had faith in them: they had been found effectual by others in all parts of the world. The Christian has faith in the sacraments of the Church as effective weapons: they have been proved to be trustworthy.
- (c) In himself. He had been well disciplined to do his duty and to be a master in the use of his weapons. Christian training and practice, what are they but the practical proof that we have faith in the faith?

II.—*The shield of faith.*

The large shield covered the person: faith must not be limited to one part of man.

- (a) It rises out of the intellectual. Consider that the same qualities are exercised here as in secular affairs of daily life. Even shrewdness, common sense, experience, expediency, and the like, must have their place. Above all, religion is rational: he must study to understand. Herein he exercises his faith.
- (b) It pervades the moral region. The faith is to be lived and applied in all directions. "Above all" may preferably be rendered "In all things." Beware of partial conversion: e.g. the priest or religious who resents some of the conditions of his life, and does not apply them: the Christian who is content that one side of his character should remain unreformed.
- (c) It penetrates his spirit. Many spiritual dangers assail the soldier in his conflict. Scruples are the outcome of disproportion: he must learn the healthiness of the gospel. Self-confidence by reason of satisfactory progress: despair of one's self through failure, etc.: in all these, when yielded to, the shield of faith has not been taken to cover the whole person. They generally arise from not making God sufficiently the object of one's faith.

III.—*Quenching the fiery darts of the wicked.*

- (a) Two sources of temptation: internal and external. Not all temptation is to be ascribed to the evil one: much of it arises from within. The soil in which the seed is sown may be in fault, or the enemy may sow tares. The simile of S. Paul here regards the external source of temptation. The evil one is very malicious, very wily, very powerful: but his power is limited, and he is powerless against God. Whenever he is permitted to assail us God is ready to give sufficient grace to overcome him.
- (b) It is especially the soldier whom he attacks. The unarmed is sufficiently at the mercy of his own interior temptations. "My son, if thou come to serve the Lord prepare thy soul for temptation" (Eccles. ii. 1); then it is that the evil one shoots forth all his darts, to persuade one, if possible, that one was doing better before one became so devout.
- (c) The darts are combustible on meeting with resistance (Ps. vii. 13, R.V.; exx. 4). Either they will strike against the soldier's person or they must be received on the shield of faith. The person provides a very suitable material for their combustion, because the external temptation ignites on uniting with the interior sources of temptation: the shield is constructed of material which quenches the ignition on receiving the dart.

The Fear of Death

TWENTY-FIRST FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"It is appointed unto men once to die."—Heb. ix. 27.

Picture: my death-bed.

Resolve: "*Memento mori.*"

I.—*The fear of death.*

- (a) Because unknown yet certain, and while certain yet most uncertain as to its time and manner. Such fear, within limits, is reasonable; it is partly physical, the shrinking from illness, pain and helplessness, and partly intellectual. In the mental presence of the dreadful and the strange it is not to be regarded as wicked.
- (b) Because of reluctance to go. Under normal circumstances it is natural to cling to life. There is a physical desire of life which is of great service to us at various times in life; and there is the reluctance to leave friends, occupations, interests, and responsibilities. Neither is this fear of death blameworthy.
- (c) Because of the power of death to fix one's condition. This fear may arise through consciousness of alienation from God, in which case it may be made of great service. Or, from a reasonable lack of assurance. It is a special work of divine grace to prepare for death so as to welcome it or to meet it with calmness and resignation.

II.—*Christian practices anent this fear.*

- (a) It is an error to think it right to put out of mind the thought of death, as either spoiling life's pleasure or disqualifying one for its duties. Death, as the great event of life, for which in some grave sense life is a preparation, is for the Christian to become an aid to his interpretation of life, giving him a truer estimate of its relationship.
- (b) He should pray by rule for a good death, remembering that it may be sudden, or he may lose the power of reflection and preparation, or in his decay his whole powers of spiritual application may be dissipated. It is a common error that one is sure to repent on a death-bed; more often than not the mind, if not previously fixed on God, has no power of doing so at that extreme moment when Satan puts forth his final efforts, and the dying one is least qualified by physical decay to resist him. Pray therefore for the grace of final perseverance.
- (c) By calm consideration of death as a Christian learn to place the hopes with increasing fixity upon God, that confidence in him may overcome the shrinking from death as one learns not to think of the latter apart from him. Be strengthened in this by thoughts of the holy dead, commending them to God, and so making practical use of the fellowship with them.

III.—*A wholesome fear, not depressing.*

- (a) The reflections just made, if frequent, result in a more serious use of life, which in itself is a preparation to meet death calmly; and yet more in a growing acquaintance with God, who will raise the mind to beyond death in anticipation and hope and in desire for the beyond.
- (b) For thus will an attachment be found for that longing of one's being for permanence, which is otherwise one of the fears of death; an attachment which gradually withdraws the mind from clinging to those relationships which are not enduring, and which elevates present obligations by infusing them with the will of God.
- (c) And thus death itself can be calmly thought of in relation to God, being realized as part of his good purpose, and therefore a safe experience in him who endures beyond death. It was even further that S. Paul had reached, regarding it as opening to yet fuller fellowship with him. It is not to be expected that we shall be at present in that confident anticipation of S. Paul; he stood in every way far beyond us. But pray that Almighty God may bring us in his good time so to regard it.

Prayer and the Will

TWENTY-FIRST SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"But ye, beloved, . . . praying in the Holy Ghost."—Jude 20.

Picture: the spirit of prayer as manifested in 1 Kings viii. 54-61.

Resolve: to examine the spirit in which I pray.

I.—*The spirit of prayer.*

- (a) Recognize prayer first as a duty of sonship. There is no question here of attraction to it, but only of the relation of one's will to Almighty God. If I believe in God, and if therefore I would live within his will, I must pray; for myself—for pardon and grace; for others; for the kingdom of Christ. This last is specially my duty, yet it is often that for which I am least inclined to pray. I do not pray as I should, "in the Holy Ghost."
- (b) It is as members of the kingdom of Christ that we Churchmen say offices; we often use much of our prayer-time over them. They are primarily acts of worship, and a directing of the will, in which the individual is merged in the Church. The cxixth Psalm is the worship of the will of God. I know how faulty is my recitation of offices, and that yet the duty is not removed. I must improve in my recitation.
- (c) First, I should go to my private prayers. If I am not praying there as a child of God, how can I expect to pray as a member of the Church of Christ? And behind private prayers, I will go to the inner springs of life. The private prayers will be emotional, or selfish, or the perfunctoriness of a habit, unless the will be set upon God, and the life belong to him.

II.—*Conditions of a prayerful disposition.*

- (a) Prayer is either the seeking of the penitent after God, or it is the expression of fellowship with him. Sometimes prayer gets stale because we are forgetting the sinner's constant need of the Saviour. Sometimes, because we are not maintaining the fellowship at its proper level. Give more time to the realization of his presence, and do not rush into words.
- (b) Prayer often suffers because we do not believe in it as we should. It is a something to be done, rather than that which is expected to have an answer. Test yourself by the spontaneity with which you breathe a prayer at any moment during the day, when you are conscious of a need, and when you hear of another's need.
- (c) But any deep experience in prayer is the outcome of a drawing of the heart towards God himself. *Do I seek him?* One may pray for things and people, and yet not pray to a person, still less pray to him who interprets the heart, and searches it, and whose will is what one is stretching out after. What have I learned to know of God through prayer?

III.—*Prayer and the will.*

- (a) The truest secrets of prayer centre round the will. The prayer which opens the knowledge of God to one is the prayer of the life which is set upon doing his will. Many pray selfishly for what they can get for themselves, who think little of whether they are trying to do his will day by day in all things.
- (b) And the prayer which increases my knowledge of God is the prayer which is according to his will. Search after him in prayer and in life alike, that he may reveal himself. Then turn back into prayer whatever he shows you of himself, that you may use his gifts in fellowship with him, and grow in the knowledge of his will. And give time in prayer to wait on his will, and to assimilate it.
- (c) Prayer, if it is to experience the attractiveness of God, must not only be the expression of a desire to know his will, but must be made with a readiness to receive his will, and to do it. There is the prayer which is made to get our own will, and there is the prayer which is made that his will be done, and that I may know it and do it. It is this latter which draws the heart to prayer, and teaches its attractiveness, and even that his will is sweetest when it contradicts mine.

The Duty of Forgiveness

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?"—S. Matt. xviii. 21.

Picture: the scene of S. Peter's restoration after the Resurrection, by the Sea of Galilee.

Resolve: to study the character of Jesus Christ in prayer and meditation for imitation.

I.—*The Christian character and growth.*

- (a) So far the apostle realizes the principle, but cannot grasp its application: it is no longer to be an eye for an eye, but "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive." As Moses' law put a check to unlimited revenge, so Christ raised the standard to forgiveness. But how far was this to go? To take an extreme case Peter suggests "seven." It was a laudable attempt to follow the teaching of Christ, while as yet the progress of his own heart could not follow it.
- (b) But let Peter pass on until he has learned to interpret the Passion of Jesus Christ in the light of his own denial and his restoration, and in the light of Pentecost; then mark him. Acts ii. 37-39. Let the years go by in which the apostle is growing in grace, unfolding the cross in daily life, imitating Jesus, and he tells us that we are called to follow him in suffering wrongfully (1 Peter ii. 19 ff; iii. 9, 17, 18; iv. 1, 14).
- (c) This revelation has to be learned by each one of us through the growth of Christian life, however familiar we are with it as a fundamental principle. We are prepared to forgive if we find that we have made a mistake, or if the fault can be shown to be ours. But in other cases what an amount of palaver we require before condescending graciously to forgive! How much reward we often expect in gratitude and esteem! How often too we cannot forgive, at any rate for a long time!

II.—*The study and imitation of Jesus Christ.*

- (a) By penitence we are to learn how to forgive. The forgiven sinner is on the way to forgive. As his heart grows in forgiveness, and he realizes more God's bounty and his own unworthiness and infinite need, he becomes more ready to forgive. The Lord's prayer becomes to him a reality of Christian duty.
- (b) And by contemplation of Jesus Christ, study of him and daily purpose to imitate him, we are to learn first to practise this prime law of Christianity; then by practice to begin to love it, as it brings us into conformity with Christ, and makes him sweeter to us.
- (c) Consider then the relation of devotion to conduct. Many approve of forgiveness and make good resolutions, but when an injury is done them regretfully find that they cannot forgive. It is only by intimate study of Jesus Christ, based on the knowledge of his dealings with our evil hearts, and how the sense of his forgiveness has changed us, that one learns to forgive.

III.—*Consider some of the words.*

- (a) "How oft?" What meanness of heart! Does God count times? How often has he forgiven me? Have I not found each forgiveness a pledge that he will forgive me again? It is no question of times, but of spirit and disposition. He indeed cannot forgive, if we are not in a forgiveable spirit, if, for example, we will not forgive. But it is not for us to limit our forgiveness, who cannot read the heart, and whose forgiveness does not carry with it the eternal remission of sins.
- (b) "My brother." Ah! if only we did regard him who offends us as our brother; brother in the sharing of the great divine forgiveness, brother in the Christian warfare. He who seeks to be forgiven by us appeals to a brother who himself has to seek forgiveness from a higher source. In view of this consider the example of him who while we were his enemies died for us.
- (c) "Against me." So long as it is only personal the duty is clear, though inclination be against it unless we have the mind of Christ. But what if my brother sin against God! then how oft shall I forgive him? Is it not good to think rather of this than of the personal aspect?

Gospel Fellowship

TWENTY-SECOND MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Your fellowship in the gospel."—Phil. i. 5, cp. R.V.

Consider: the mission of Epaphroditus to Rome.

Pray: for a sense of the responsibility of grace.

I.—*The gospel is a fellowship.*

- (a) The Philippians realized the corporateness of their life. Men hitherto unknown to each other found themselves united by the deepest interests of life, bound to a common purpose and hope, drawn to one another by the closest associations of fraternity. The degree of their fellowship was a measure of the reality of their religion. Consider too how S. Paul wrote to Philemon of Onesimus (Philemon 16).
- (b) The bond was deeper even than that of common interest in a lofty purpose. It was based not on an attachment but on a fact. Brought into the new life by the blood of Christ, their fellowship was primarily with the Father and the Son, and through him with one another (1 S. John i. 3, 7), and was the expression of that gift of grace to each member of the body whereby he is joined to the one Lord.
- (c) But such fellowship has to be made active by the exercise of these gifts. So in these words S. Paul is in truth congratulating the readers upon their fellowship in the furtherance of the gospel. To be brought into the fellowship of the gospel demands an active co-operation in its furtherance.

II.—*"Your fellowship in the gospel."*

- (a) The Philippians had manifested their fellowship by gifts for the support of S. Paul from the first days (iv. 15, 16), and now by the ministry of Epaphroditus (iv. 18). It is a sign of grace when an individual or a parish has such a desire to co-operate in the fulness of life.
- (b) The examples given could be explained by a merely personal attachment to the apostle, and with many Christians fellowship does not go beyond this. But the devotion of the Philippians after the lapse of years, during which S. Luke's residence might have weakened a merely personal bond, is proof that here was the true grasp of Christianity as a co-operation.
- (c) The most powerful fellowship in the furtherance of the gospel is the exhibition in life of the power of grace. A true desire to have fellowship in furtherance is one fruit of this fellowship in grace, and most pressing upon the Church now. No privilege without obligation; no brotherhood without the charge, "Go and do thou likewise." The fellowship of Christ is life, and life is energy, movement, expansion.

III.—*"From the first day until now."*

- (a) Thank God for lives given to him from the beginning, for the sacrament of Baptism, and its appreciation by many. Praise him for those in whom the initial grace has not been lost. Think of infant baptism as the Church's dauntless challenge to the world of her belief in grace and the necessity for it.
- (b) Perseverance: S. Paul even had found that the love of many could wax cold. Pray for the young, the newly confirmed, the catechumens, and for yourself that he may continue to give you the grace of perseverance, when, habits of Christian practice having been formed, it is become possible to pursue them for years after they have ceased to be filled with vital energy.
- (c) Consider the bounty of God's grace to you from the first day until now: how he has heaped up blessings upon you all the time you have been sharing in the divine fellowship. What obligation to further the gospel by the responsive life of fellowship, and through this by the expansive fellowship with one another towards them that are without!

Patience

TWENTY-SECOND TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Lord, have patience with me."—S. Matt. xviii. 26.

Picture: the excuse.

Resolve: to exercise patience in some particular.

I.—*Right appreciation of God.*

- (a) It is right to appeal to his patience, and to do so is the act of one who estimates his character aright. His power gives him patience, and his disposition towards us disposes him to be patient with us. "He remembereth that we are but dust." Pride will not ask God for anything: it demands justice. The humble spirit appeals to him for patience.
- (b) The prayer duly regards his claims. "Against thee only have I sinned." Every such prayer to God is an acknowledgment of his due, and the very prayer strengthens our remembrance of his rightful demands upon us. If we pray only for what we want, and do not give proper place to the prayer for merciful judgment, we shall soon forget our relationship to him as debtors and servants.
- (c) Consider the necessity for the prayer. What if he should not be patient with us! The Lord's prayer recognizes this in the words, "Forgive us our debts—our trespasses." "If thou, Lord, should be extreme to mark what is done amiss, Lord who may abide it?" The consciousness of this need of patience should add reverence and humility to all our approaches to him.

II.—*The basis of this prayer.*

- (a) There are occasions when it would be impertinent to pray for patience, and only the prayer for mercy remains. To ask for patience expresses a sense of some excuse which can be urged. It is the sense of the frailty of human life in the sea of temptation, and of the disposition which has been led astray before we came to exercise our own responsibility.
- (b) There is in the prayer, too, the sense that one can do better. There is hopefulness in it. If in some sense this very hopefulness is an acknowledgment of one's fault, an admission that it need not have been, there is in it also a consciousness of that vocation of life which realizes that one is born for higher things, and must aspire after them. Man is born to conquer: despair is the loss of this human aspiration.
- (c) There is in it also the sense of the encouragement of patience. Nothing is more inspiring than the conviction that he has patience because he confidently expects higher things of us. He sees the possibilities of which we are semi-conscious, and so we are renewed in our hopefulness.

III.—*Further reflections.*

- (a) The servant prayed for patience, and received forgiveness. Each act of divine patience is indeed an exercise of forgiveness. It is well to combine the prayer for patience with that for mercy, lest we should ignore the offence, and think too lightly of the need of grace. And thus there may be an abuse of this prayer by not appreciating the goodness of his patience.
- (b) He who prays for patience should exercise the same, as is taught us in this parable. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive." To realize the divine patience with one's self is a sure education in the exercise of patience with others. And the Almighty will be very patient with those who truly exercise patience.
- (c) And, too, we must learn to be patient with God, and not to measure him by the limitations of our own impatience. It is very natural for us to be impatient with him, because we measure him by the space of our short lives. Hence our tendency to make use of questionable means to hasten ends which we consider to be desirable. Hence, too, our unseemly impatience with him in prayer.

Forgiveness a Condition of Forgiveness.

TWENTY-SECOND WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"So likewise."—S. Matt. xviii. 35.

Picture : the separation of the sheep and the goats : see S. Matt. xxv. 31-46.

Pray : "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive," etc.

I.—*The law of divine forgiveness.*

- (a) It is taught in the Lord's prayer and in the sermon on the mount. It is illustrated here by a parable. It is the spiritual character of forgiveness. God cannot forgive when we are not able to receive forgiveness. Away with any mechanical thoughts of divine forgiveness as an arbitrary exercise of divine omnipotence, or as an exhibition of a good disposition regardless of the moral responsibility of forgiveness!
- (b) The universal law of the spiritual is not exhausted in this case; it is merely applied to one important case of the possibility of receiving forgiveness. Thus nothing is said here of repentance, or of that amendment which is the point of true penitence. One point is seized upon; the heart which cannot forgive does not understand forgiveness, nor can receive it.
- (c) For forgiveness lies within the relationship of the Father to his Son; it is "My heavenly Father." And it is "his brother" whom the son in the divine family is to forgive. It is no remission of punishment external to the heart. But the divine forgiveness, realized in the spirit of sonship is often found to be that which first produces in us this spirit of forgiveness. The Father melts the son's heart by his forgiveness, and so makes him forgiving.

II.—*Elucidation of the parable.*

- (a) There is no thought here of Almighty God repenting of his exercise of forgiveness: he never forgives unmorally. But in the illustration the action of the servant is subsequent to the forgiveness, and the master uses the only power which he possesses. Even so it is not a change of his mind, but the expression of his mind towards a new offence.
- (b) A man has been forgiven of God. His conscience at the time received the absolution. But the gift involved a response in the spirit of sonship, and his conscience should act in accordance with that spirit. It fails to do so because he has not truly received the gift as a spiritual gift, and it has neither made him more tender, nor established in him a sense of gratitude and debt. But the absolution is not withdrawn: it is as one who has been absolved that he is now judged for having treated spiritual gifts as a common thing.
- (c) But the general lesson is not merely that of an unforgiving disposition following upon divine forgiveness. It definitely regards a disposition which cannot be forgiven, and this not merely in the matter in which we will not exercise forgiveness. The whole law of forgiveness is "so likewise." Here man is essentially in the image of God. The heart to which this is not a necessary relationship is one which is regarding the spiritual gift of fellowship with God as nothing else than a remission of dreaded punishment.

III.—*"So likewise."*

- (a) Avoid scruple, while jealously regarding the true principle. The personal injury may be such that one cannot easily put it away from the mind, still less feel friendly. Remember also that friendship requires confidence, and this may have been rendered impossible. Or again, the advance made towards healing a breach may be repulsed.
- (b) In a really difficult case, when one strives to forgive but seems unable to do so, pray much that uncontrolled feelings may be subdued. And reflect much on the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, and the injury done to him by sinning against God. How difficult do I find it to forgive a personal wrong! Yet he forgives much greater wrongs.
- (c) To forgive an injury is not natural, nor even under grace is it easy. To forgive is a sign of grace, as it is a fruit of grace. "So likewise" illustrates from this case the whole law of the spiritual: as we receive so must we show ourselves to be. The fruit of grace is a Christian character.

Filled, in Jesus Christ

TWENTY-SECOND THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ." —Phil. i. 11.

Picture : the parable of the vine and the branches in S. John xv.

Resolve : that all I do this day shall be done in Christ.

I.—*"The fruits of righteousness."*

- (a) The simile is instructive : the Old Testament uses it (Amos vi. 12), and in a broader usage the life of the tree goes behind the O.T. into the most primitive conceptions of religion. There is indeed a principle of life, which, coursing through the tree, produces and matures the fruit. The fruit is the natural manifestation of the tree's healthiness, and not an extraneous adjunct.
- (b) S. Paul says "the fruit" (R.V. marg.), by which we understand a collective use of the word. Compare Gal. v. 22 and contrast "works" in ver. 19. There is a unity in the matured products of the life within a Christian. And it is the fruit of the tree, and each tree has its own fruit. The fruit of righteousness is the harmonious development of the life according to the will of God ; each must develop his own life by the grace of God, and not another's life. Not imitation but healthful growth.
- (c) The picture leads us to interpret the simile by the great revelation of abiding in Christ, in whom God, the great husbandman, will cultivate and fructify the branches. The sap of life is in the tree of the Body of Christ, not in the isolated branch ; but it pours itself into the branch which is united to the main stem. Do we never seek the fruit rather than seek to abide in him ?

II.—*"Which are by Jesus Christ."*

- (a) S. Paul says "filled with the fruit which is through Jesus Christ." The fruit itself is righteousness, in its manifold unity ; its ultimate source is God, its immediate source is Jesus Christ, the mediator in the Christian life as in creation and redemption. The first principle of the Christian's life is to look to its source, ever mindful that "apart from me ye can do nothing."
- (b) And the fruit is righteousness : "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Some seek unction for their fruit, others seek happiness, others again seek the salvation of others. We must go beyond piety, beyond a useful life, beyond the acquisition of particular graces ; all these are only the special species ; the essential quality is righteousness. Without this the fruit may be attractive, but it will be bitter to the taste and rotten at the core.
- (c) The fruit is the product of the tree, produced and matured by the life-giving sap. The fruit is righteousness because he in whom we abide is our righteousness. The product of the Christian life is the growth of Christ our righteousness within him.

III.—*"Filled."*

- (a) S. Paul uses the perfect tense : he looks forward to the day of Christ (ver. 10). The Christian's present is always in view of the future with which it is one. Then will be the manifestation of all that is being done in us now. Look forward with hopeful wonder, and you may well marvel at what God is doing with you now in view of the great then. There is a time when the fruit looks very starved ; gradually it swells ; it gains ripeness and sweetness. Have patience ; what God has done to others, he will do in you also.
- (b) Filled. To think of one's future perfection seems almost too daring ; but dare one doubt or limit God's work ? The more one does think of it the more surely will one be careful to abide in the vine. S. Paul dared to speak of being filled with all the fulness of God, and the contemplation filled him with longing.
- (c) Filled. It speaks of the satisfaction of heaven. Here one is not filled ; there are unsatisfied longings, aching emptinesses. Self, like a great void, is the measure of the unfilled part ; but when at length one is filled, then nothing can intrude.

Have Patience with me

TWENTY-SECOND FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Have patience with me."—S. Matt. xviii. 26.

Picture : the scene.

Resolve : acts of devotion to the Passion.

I.—"*Have patience with me.*"

- (a) "If thou, Lord, shouldest be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who may abide it?" We stand moment by moment by the long-suffering of the divine mercy. Even the best of us would fall away at once if the grace of God were withdrawn from us. But it is his own goodness that he sees in us, not any goodness or merit of our own.
- (b) Consider the patience of God with yourself, against your own weakness of purpose, falls, and backslidings. And consider his patience with sinners, enduring their rebellion and waiting that he may have mercy. Draw therefrom a great confidence in him, and great encouragement to persevere in prayer for the conversion of sinners.
- (c) And consider the divine patience as a reason for cultivating the grace of patience both in regard to yourself and in regard to others. Why should we lose heart with ourselves at our slow progress, while he is so patient, and does not lose heart over us? And be patient with others, when they try you: God has great patience with you.

II.—"*And I will pay thee all.*"

- (a) His patience with us is an expression of his conviction that grace is all-powerful. He sees the end where we see only the beginning. Such is his desire for us that our presence in heaven will more than repay him for his patience.
- (b) Consider, further, our ignorance of the real extent of the debt. In the parable the man did know his debt; but it was more than he could grasp, and he answered in a well-meaning ignorance, still thinking that he would be able to pay it some day. The development of patience is the very slow realization of the magnitude of the debt, and the conviction that he cannot pay it. This penitence is the outcome of the growing experience of the divine patience.
- (c) It expresses nevertheless a truly Christian frame of mind. The penitent does not desire to shuffle out of his debt of forgiveness, regarding the remission of punishment rather than the remission of sins. "Thou forgavest them, O God, and punishedst their own inventions" (Ps. xcix. 8, P.B.V.). Consider the place of penance in confession, and fulfil it always with a great sense of responsibility.

III.—"*Owed him ten thousand talents.*"

- (a) God makes the true estimate of our debt, because he alone can estimate his own purpose in the creation of man, he alone can weigh our failure, our base ingratitude, and our abuse of grace.
- (b) "Forasmuch as he had not to pay." Consider the divine scrutiny of the heart's excuses, and the true estimate of our poverty. God is not deceived by the palliations whereby we minimise our debt or over-estimate our resources. In his sight we are bankrupt.
- (c) "Forgave him the debt." There is a great guarantee in a forgiveness which is given by one who estimates the debt aright, and knows that we have not wherewith to pay. There is no fear that God will some day find out more, and cast the debtor into prison for default of payment.

The Acquisition of Life

TWENTY-SECOND SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"In your patience possess ye your souls."—S. Luke xxi. 19.

Picture: the endurance of Christians under persecution.

Resolve: to consider once daily the great probation of life.

I.—*The words.*

- (a) Nearly every word is mistranslated or misunderstood. "Patience" should be "endurance." It is that character of the strong man who is not broken down by deferred hope, or by disappointment, or by blows. It is the opposite of that feeble character, which, too weak to break, just bends under its trials. The A.V. has translated endurance everywhere by patience. But see the verb in S. Matt. xxiv. 13; 1 Cor. xiii. 7; Heb. xii. 2, etc.
- (b) "Possess" should be "shall win": see R.V. It is the same verb as in S. Luke xviii. 12, where the R.V. has "of all that I get." The verse represents the endurance of life: on this all depends. The soul is not yet one's own possession; it has to be won in the history of a life-time in the warfare of grace.
- (c) "Soul" is not a mistranslation, but we have cramped our estimate of Christianity. Substitute "self" or "life" for "soul," and to most there is an entirely new significance in the verse. See R.V. margin. The soul is not a secret treasure given us to guard through life and to keep somehow, although we play great risks with ourselves: the soul is one's self.

II.—*The picture.*

- (a) Thus interpreted the verse gains new force. Life is the great probation corresponding to the experience of the angels during which some fell, while others were confirmed in grace. Life will decide whether we acquire possession of our lives or not; it is the education unto freedom. "For freedom did Christ set us free; stand fast therefore" (Gal. v. 1, R.V.).
- (b) Consider then the character of freedom, as the undisturbed pursuit of the right course. Here is only partial and progressive liberty, because our freedom is not undisturbed. In hell is slavery, because forced into that which once seemed to be liberty, but was against nature, and is now found to be bitter bondage. Heaven is true freedom.
- (c) The picture interprets the character of endurance. It is that character which marks the training of the athlete. Life is the warfare: the Christian warfare is the campaign of the man of God, standing armed, and always ready, not trusting to armour which one has not tried and learned to confide in, not presuming on one's alertness and despising the armour which has been provided.

III.—*The picture developed.*

- (a) In Heb. x. 39, the same picture is used, and is elaborately developed. We are not characterized by a shrinking back unto perdition, but of faith unto the acquisition of life. Only a resolute faith can win the life, such faith as was witnessed in the endurance of the O.T. worthies (Heb. xi.) in their day of conflict. The writer duly regards the strain and peril which are involved: the prize is not always to the swift, but to him that can endure. "Let us run with endurance the contest which lieth before us" (Heb. xii. 1).
- (b) It is a vivid picture of life: life is lent to us, and we are bound to use it to the best advantage in character and act, strenuously, wisely, in every relationship, home, business, socially, intellectually. "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" (S. Luke xvi. 12).
- (c) Examine not this religious practice or that duty, but the strenuousness of life as a whole. Am I getting possession of life in the great venture of faith, that touchstone by which one tests the invisible? Others have proved and are proving that in the contamination of the world life can be clean, that amid countless burdens it can be bright, in the midst of compromise it can be strong, that in a world bounded by sense there is the power of the Holy Ghost.

Tempting God

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?*"—S. Matt. xxii. 18.

Picture: the scene in the gospel.

Pray: against self-deception in prayer.

I.—*Tempting God.*

- (a) They asked him a question which they fondly supposed would put him into a difficulty; their motives were not pure. In any such way we cannot consciously act, nor could they have done so had they believed him to be the Son of God. But we do nevertheless often tempt God in many ways wherein unconsciously we are measuring him by ourselves.
- (b) How often do we tempt him by dangerously presuming on his character of love and mercy, relying upon the conviction that he will not desert us or let us go! Or we expect his grace to save us, although we are carelessly inappreciative of it, and know that there are conditions under which he must withdraw it from us.
- (c) Any taking of liberties with God, due to lack of reverence and the true fear of God, which accepts his providence almost as a matter of course, is tempting God. Such liberties may be taken through carelessness of conduct, not regarding his character, or through false prayer, not considering the conditions of prayer, or through lack of gratitude, not heeding the bounty which is so lavishly dispensed to us regardless of our deserts.

II.—*Some examples involving hypocrisy.*

- (a) By wilful proximity to sin. We profess to believe in God and to serve him; but we believe in him so little that we can run any risks of grieving him by sin rather than put restraint upon ourselves and our immediate desires. And we are satisfied with the honesty of our intention not to sin, at the time that we are thus taking no measures to resist.
- (b) By carelessness in the use of grace. Consider this in two ways, and reflect upon the little regard paid to grace. He provides what he knows to be necessary to us, and yet we presume to know better than he, and that its careful use is not required. He provides of his loving mercy, and we are indifferent to his gifts and inappreciative of the giver.
- (c) We tempt him to indulge us by false prayers, pleading for extra help, or to be let off what is difficult, to be excused some hardship which is good for us. Even at times we indulge unconsciously in the irreverence of trying to bribe him, asking him to accept one thing in place of another, to wink at my aggravating temper because of my earnest Church work, or to receive good resolution and promise without true contrition.

III.—*"Ye hypocrites."*

- (a) He called them so; yet they were the professedly religious. And technically they were so; but they had perverted the standard of religion until they did not know God, but were only acquainted with their own ideas of him. An insincere religion, its form without its spirit, its external and conventional practice without the deep searching after God, will produce a similar result in any age.
- (b) There is great need of sober and sound thinking about God, and that this be continually resorted to. Yet one may go on with one's prayers year after year without renewing one's investigation of their basis until they have become to us conventional forms, and not the honest expression of one's life. Almighty God, if we are heeding him, is continually changing us; but we are very ready to rest lazily on what we knew of him years ago, and to leave our prayers unaltered by the changes of our life.
- (c) Some lurking fear of unbelief which we dare not investigate, or a surprise which makes us refuse to examine ourselves too closely lest we should find out what we wish to remain hidden, may at any time bring us face to face with conscious hypocrisy.

Enemies of the Cross

TWENTY-THIRD MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"The enemies of the cross of Christ."—Phil. iii. 18.

Picture: the vision of S. Martin: the evil one appeared to him, feigning himself to be Christ. The saint asked to see the marks of his wounds.

Resolve: an act of mortification.

I.—*Enemies of its charity.*

- (a) They were preaching Christ of envy and strife, not out of love, to make S. Paul's chains gail him (Phil. i. 15-17). This is the spirit of partizanship, and it is to be found not only in schisms. It is no longer the love of Christ which constraineth.
- (b) How delicate is the border line between faithfulness and narrow-mindedness without Christian charity! There is a certain spirit, too frequently manifested in theological controversy, which is an enemy of the love of the cross. In extreme manifestation we see it in persecution.* What if in our zeal for Christ's truth we hide the love of the cross!
- (c) Those of whom S. Paul was writing did not think themselves enemies of Christ's cross. Were they not Christians? Did they not preach in Christ's name? But in that day he will say of some who have preached and done marvels in his name, "I never knew you" (S. Matt. vii. 22, 23). How terrible if one's crowning condemnation should be that I made men hate the cross of Christ by my unloving presentation of it in my life!

II.—*Enemies of its mortification.*

- (a) "Whose god is their belly" (Phil. iii. 19). There was no mortification of will or body. If the cross is the gospel of love, it is the revelation of love made effective through the loss of self. There is, however, mortification which is self-love in the form of spiritual pride, and mortification which makes us sour-tempered. And in the condemnation of others whom we regard as enemies of the mortification of the cross, we ourselves may easily become enemies of the charity of the cross.
- (b) Luxury is just the using to the full of what opportunity provides—without restraint. A Christianity without mortification has lost its cross. There is some danger of this in the modern liberty of Sunday. It is revealed blatantly in the selfish extravagance of the rich: but beware lest we only fall short of their enmity of the cross from lack of opportunity; for if we make ourselves as comfortable as we can, we do not differ from them.
- (c) A life which does not face sin is not learning the mortification of the cross. Pray for this revelation of the cross in increasing fulness: it will put the love and the mortification of the cross in due relationship.

III.—*Enemies of its power.*

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. iii. 5).

- (a) Faithful in observance, but not knowing the power of the cross upon the life. We can deceive ourselves that we are good Christians, when we cannot forgive those from whom we have suffered wrong. "Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. iv. 32).
- (b) Thoroughly believe, but do not practise. A merely nominal Christian is the greatest enemy of the cross: he is its denial. He denies in his life that we are crucified with Christ.
- (c) In a life which has no devoutness we also deny its power. "It is from the cross that these thoughts come, which your friends find so soothing, so unspeakably tender. None of them comes from me. I feel my own aridity: but I feel, too, that God, when he will, can make an ocean flow upon this bed of sand" (Eugenie de Guerin).

* Some may like to read Browning's "Holy Cross Day." Note that terrible line, "And Rome make amends for Calvary."

The Heavenly Commonwealth

TWENTY-THIRD TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Our citizenship is in heaven."—Phil. iii. 20, R.V.

Picture: the missionary appealing to his ambassador, or protected by his nationality.

Resolve: *Sursum corda*.

I.—*Citizenship (or, commonwealth, R.V. marg.).*

- (a) The privilege of co-operation: Andrew brought forward the young lad (S. John vi. 8, 9), and was united in work with Philip (S. John xii. 22). So too we are fellow-citizens with the saints (Eph. ii. 19). Apply this truth to the responsibility and support of Christian fellowship.
- (b) The responsibility of loyalty. A Nestorian, whose only knowledge of Englishmen was that of the missionaries, once said, "You English do not know what fear is." An English missionary always feels that he must live up to his reputation as an Englishman; nor may a citizen of heaven let his commonwealth be disgraced before the world.
- (c) The enthusiasm of loyalty is manifested in missionaryship. The first citizen in the commonwealth was the first missionary; Andrew found his own brother Simon (S. John i. 40-42). We never realize a blessing until we exercise its responsibility: the Christian commonwealth is to be spread by the enthusiasm of its citizens; then we shall know what it is to be "denizens of regions past imagining."

II.—*A citizen of no mean city (Acts xxi. 39).*

- (a) The Christian should have pride of birth. "We ought then, beloved brethren, to remember and to know, and when we call God Father, we ought to act as God's children" (Cyp. *De Orat. Dom.*, ii.). "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" was the dignified apology of S. Polycarp.
- (b) The rights of citizenship are efficacious not merely in the capital but in the extremest edge of the realm. S. Paul, born in Tarsus, exercised his rights of citizenship in Philippi, never having seen Rome. The citizens of heaven may be at present only in the boundary provinces, but the imperial legions are their defence.
- (c) It is the great effort of Christian life to utilize here and now the resources of this great commonwealth of which he is a member. But because we do not live in the capital we are in danger of thinking that we are bereft of its support. In this we resemble rather the pre-pentecostal Andrew, who seeing the lad with his few fish said, "But what are they among so many?"

III.—*A commonwealth in heaven.*

- (a) It marks the character both of the loyal citizen and of his privileges and support. We *are* members of the kingdom of heaven, already within the kingdom: into this kingdom others are to be translated from out of the kingdom of darkness: and this kingdom has its laws and its fellowship. In a Roman colony, the colonists were the privileged class in a population of tolerated foreign residents, native born, and slaves.
- (b) It marks the permanence of the kingdom: an eternal kingdom as contrasted with the kingdoms of this world which rise and wane. A kingdom of which one does not cease to be a member by death. S. Andrew is more than ever now a living member of it: he is one of its foundations (Eph. ii. 19-20).
- (c) It marks the inwardness of the kingdom. "The kingdom of God is within you." To be brought within the kingdom is also to have the kingdom within us. In some degree this is true even of earthly citizenship: the discipline of the national life produces a national character in the member. Much more is it true that the Christian carries the kingdom about with him in the plenitude of its powers, for this kingdom has no laws of space, but instead it has principles of grace. So we who are in the kingdom pray daily "Thy kingdom come" in us and in others.

The Reverence due to the Body

TWENTY-THIRD WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Fashioned like unto his glorious body."—Phil. iii. 21.

Picture: the perfect body of the ascended Lord.

Resolve: reverence of the body.

I.—*"His glorious body."*

- (a) S. Paul is considering that as Jesus Christ took to himself a body like unto ours, so the glorified condition of his ascended body is the revelation to us of our future state of body. He regards the consideration as practical; not as an idle dream, but as a stimulus. He refers to it in connection with those enemies of the cross who are in opposition to its passion.
- (b) We have our citizenship in heaven; our body by transforming grace is to share in this privilege, whereby spirit is supreme over matter. The body is redeemed now in Christ; treated as such, the further stages of redemption will be developed in their order. Now its subjugation to the spirit, its discipline, its due reverence; afterwards its likeness to his glorious body (*i.e.* to the body of his glory, R.V.).
- (c) Consider, therefore, his body before the crucifixion. The history of its fatigues and hunger. The power communicated through it. Its ministry of passion, in the sufferings and indignities which it endured. The devotion which he allowed it to receive. Its service, as through it the spirit manifested itself unfettered. His care for the bodies of others.

II.—*Members of his body.*

- (a) No knowledge of the form of his ascended body. The apocalyptic description is purely symbolic (Rev. i.). When the ascended Lord appeared to S. Stephen and to S. Paul, he was seen in the form in which he was immediately recognized as Jesus: but this was vouchsafed for the purpose of the vision. The language of S. Paul at times would lead us to suppose that the change in form may be very great.
- (b) But pre-eminently the body of his glory has been released from the limitations of matter: and into this body we have been incorporated. Perhaps we too easily acquiesce in regarding his body, of which we are members, as other than the body of his glory. What light is thrown upon the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament, and upon membership in Christ!
- (c) And this union with him affects also our body. S. Paul does not shrink from saying that a Christian's body is a member of Christ (1 Cor. vi. 15). It is impossible to doubt that the Blessed Sacrament is effective on the body, strengthening its immortality, sanctifying it, and preparing it for its later stages of development which are now waiting upon the dissolution of its material form.

III.—*Problems of the body.*

- (a) Such reflections are easily and powerfully applied to the fleshly struggles, which so strongly confirm the Christian revelation of the union of body and soul in one man. They are more difficult in relation to the mystery of disease, which violently forces us to face the unity of the individual in relation to the greater unity of the race. But the gospel is constantly teaching us this higher unity, which we ought to learn also from many a lesson of inheritance.
- (b) The problem of disease shocks us alike by its cruel suffering and its insult to healthiness. It is almost impossible to think of the gospel of suffering; it must be felt. But one has seen it in Christians as an illuminating grace of refinement; and a transmitted glory in the sympathy and tenderness of others. One has seen it, too, in punishment. Christianity administered, Christianity received.
- (c) In the pain of suffering, and in disease as an imperfection or deformity of the body, much is yet to be learnt by us of our fellowship with the world's evil. And this fellowship is to be realized in union with him who by his sufferings has redeemed the world. And in union with him this fellowship is to bring one into closer relationship with his passion.

The Sacraments in Relation to Matter

TWENTY-THIRD THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation."—Phil. iii. 21, R.V.

Picture: the Eucharistic chalice.

Resolve: to contemplate the deep mysteries of the sacraments.

I.—*Consider matter as a medium of the divine revelation.*

- (a) God is the creator of matter: therefore matter is not evil. Therefore, also, matter can be a medium of the spiritual. And God is one, not in a merely numerical way, but as simple, uncompounded, without change of will; so that which he creates is a true manifestation of himself within the limits of its creation. Learn reverently the sacramental aspect of matter.
- (b) Revelation teaches this: "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Rom. i. 20). And elsewhere it is said that the details of the tabernacle were patterns of things in the heavens (Heb. ix. 23). Study to see God in nature, and to regard the created world as his garment.
- (c) The Incarnation is the consummation and the confirmation of this truth, first in his taking matter to himself, then in his material experience, in his resurrection body, in his ascension, and his union with men.

II.—*Consider the material in human life.*

- (a) Man is soul and body. It is mistaken to regard man as soul imprisoned in and hampered by body. Man is the meeting point of God's creation, the union of material and immaterial in rational life. There is in him that which corresponds with the material world, which is the work of God, and that which corresponds with the immaterial, which is also the work of God.
- (b) This constitution of man involves the danger of materialism; the material without acts upon the material in man's constitution, and provides the discipline of life in man's effort to resist the powerful attraction of the material upon him. But it is for the Christian to interpret the material through the key which is to be found in his own constitution. He is already translated into the kingdom of God; to him the material must be the touch of God on him.
- (c) The material in man's constitution is itself subject to the influence of grace. Matter can be permeated by spirit. The body is the servant of the spirit. Learn the value of material worship; *e.g.* attitudes of devotion, and symbolic worship, consecrating the material, as the use of incense. Now spiritually, at length, in realized experience, the body of our humiliation is being furnished anew.

III.—*Consider the truth of sacraments.*

- (a) They are the manifested evidence to us of the relation of matter to God. It is his accredited mode of conveying his grace to his material subjects. Not the annihilation of matter but the pervading of it by the Spirit is the true sacramental condition.
- (b) Apply to sacraments, and widely to sacramentals, *e.g.* holy water. This includes further the conception of man as a fitting sacramental medium. Influence is sacramental. It is the grace of God working through the human medium.
- (c) Man's body may be regarded as sacramental, because pervaded by the material element of sacraments, and as the medium of transmitting the sacraments to the hidden man. Consider fasting, sickness, pain, etc.

The Body destined for Exaltation

TWENTY-THIRD FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Who shall change the body of our humiliation."—Phil. iii. 21, R.V.

Consider: the vision of the ascended Christ to S. Paul.

Pray: for the faithful departed and *bona mors*.

I.—"*The body of our humiliation.*"

- (a) Often realized as such by its frailty and disease, thwarting the will. Sickness and pain are incidental to our probationary condition. Death and dissolution are the extreme expression of our state of humiliation.
- (b) The words imply no positive disparagement, for that which is proper to any particular state is not humiliating to it. The humiliation belongs to us rather than to our bodies, which are designed by Almighty God to minister through godly discipline to our advance.
- (c) And the humiliation is relative. S. Paul contrasts the limitations of our present condition with the glory of the ascended Lord, which is to be ours when we have attained to the redemption of the body. Human life has not attained as yet to its full development, freedom and glory (Rom. viii. 21, 23; 1 Cor. xv. 43, 44).

II.—"*His glorious body.*"

- (a) S. Paul has seen this on the road to Damascus. It is not certain that the disciples had seen its fullest development after the Resurrection, while still he lingered on earth, and his body also lingered in its transformation. The first great lesson of the Resurrection had to be that of identity with the Jesus who was known before the crucifixion.
- (b) But the lessons of this Damascus vision, enhanced perhaps by later revelations, more than supplied to S. Paul the revelation of the Transfiguration. He learned the true lessons of the human body, its honour as a true part of man, its redemption, and its glorious future when spiritualized.
- (c) Important consequences follow from this revelation. The sanctity of the body is secured by the gospel (1 Cor. vi. 14-20); the non-material character of the resurrection life is freed from the problem of a material resurrection by the revelation of the resurrection of the body spiritualized (1 Cor. xv. 44).

III.—"*Present condition of the body.*"

- (a) Consider this body destined for exaltation, so that when restored to us in its developed form it shall complete our redemption. Consider that even now it is being transformed and prepared for its future destiny through the mystery of sacramental grace. It is no wonder, when we consider its future exaltation, that it should now prove to be a source of temptation, if it is not rising according to the divine purpose.
- (b) Consider how true and faithful a servant the body is intended to be, ministering to us through life's experience, through pain, through self-discipline, through physical emotion. So, too, consider the mystery of physical pain in the Passion of the Redeemer, and see therein the light of the cross on many mysteries of life. Consider too the elevation of life through the patient endurance of weakness, the refining influence on others of an invalid and of tending those who are weaker in body than ourselves, whether children, or women, or the sick.
- (c) Lastly, consider the blessed dead, separated for a time from the body, in a state of incompleteness, being spiritually prepared for their restoration to the body in a form suited to their perfectly disciplined life. The archangel who fell is the terrible illustration to us of a spiritual body belonging to a soul which fell into sin.

From Strength to Strength

TWENTY-THIRD SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"From strength to strength."—Ps. lxxxiv. 7.

Picture : the stages of life from baptism to the beatific vision.

Resolve : never to tamper with grace.

I.—*Early stages.*

- (a) A saint is made, not born. Think of any one saint and then turn back to his early years. We cannot see how he began ; the homely experiences and their victories are hidden ; when we first detect the developing character of the saint the foundations are already well laid in stored up energy of grace. It is in these hidden years that the life has been mounting from strength to strength.
- (b) Some features are common to the earlier stages : a singular honesty which refuses to play with the grace of God, and a persistence of purpose. The seed of grace falls indeed only sometimes on good ground, and then, if we could see, we should find that grace has prepared the ground. But nothing is of equal injury to grace with the trifling spirit which takes conscious liberties.
- (c) Very often the ground is prepared secretly, and by means which do not obviously suggest grace ; the hard discipline of home difficulties, the struggle of a conscience which means well but is not religiously enlightened ; resistance to great temptation. "Thou hast been faithful in a few things."

II.—*Later stages.*

- (a) Nor are the experiences of saints even here after one pattern. Saints are not conventional, and many of them escape our notice. Here and there the heroic power of grace manifests itself in the extremity of circumstances ; at other times a peculiar fervour of devoutness or an unusual grace of love to mankind will exhibit the mounting from strength to strength.
- (b) But rarely can we thus foresee the saint, while yet we can distinguish characteristics of spiritual growth, and mark such strength as will give us confidence that after death such an one will be numbered among the holy souls. The gospel of Jesus Christ has bidden us see such marks in excessive meekness unconscious of its virtue, in love going forth to God and man in a great self-forgetfulness, in continual self-sacrifice. These rather than mortification, heroic labours and voluntary poverty (1 Cor. xiii. 3), are signs of going from strength to strength.
- (c) The merely external activities of Christianity are not any guarantee. They may be due to secondary causes, as the love of excelling, the spirit of energy and leadership, even the desire to be well thought of. Mere activity rather exhausts strength than stores it up. Hence the saints of the earth are more often hidden.

III.—*Present experience of saints.*

- (a) That they can live continuously in God's presence, and see him spiritually in all the experiences which they enjoy, is proof of their attainment, by whatever road they have reached it. That they can do this, upheld by grace, without falling through spiritual self-satisfaction, is yet another sign.
- (b) Is it still from strength to strength ? To some the idea of advance in perfection seems a contradiction : to have attained to the beatific vision seems a final attainment, and it is a proof of the infinite satisfaction of God that the saints cannot grow weary of him ; while their desires are satisfied with a spiritual enjoyment which by reason of its nature cannot pall.
- (c) But to others it seems best to describe the life of the saints as a progress from strength to strength, from glory to glory, from grace to grace, in experience. And one thinks of the sinless humanity of him, who grew in favour with God and man, as the illustration of what one means. The saint is still a creature, while Almighty God is infinite and inexhaustible.

Self the Great Drain upon Life

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"A woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years."—S. Matt ix. 20.

Picture : the woman drawing near.

Pray : for those who are conscious of the need of Christ.

I.—*The life without grace.*

- (a) It is not the gay and thoughtless life, but that sadder experience which is here pictured, the more pitiable life which is conscious of its need of Christ and cannot find him. The issue of blood is known, although hidden from the curious gaze. It is realized as a loss of life, and an ultimate death. The mischief is known to be within, and to be of long standing.
- (b) Experiments have been tried; the life has gone from one hopeful expedient to another. All the competing physicians have been resorted to, only to prove a failure. Strength of will, faith in the prescription, have alike failed. Nowadays she will have tried spiritualism, Christian science, new theology, the latest sect and what not.
- (c) And even now she has not given up hope, although her friends might well reason with her that this is only another experiment of the same sort. She is merely following the crowd, attracted by rumours of cures. But Almighty God has watched her; perhaps only through these years of hope-breaking failures could she have been brought to value rightly the gifts of Christ. It is not only in this last experiment that we should see the drawings of divine grace.

II.—*Suggestive, too, of many faintly Christian lives.*

- (a) Many lives there are which make no progress. One could not say that they were not Christian, but they do not show the evidence of life. There is a small issue of blood draining the life from within. Perhaps a lack of response and appreciation, some failure to surrender, a too ready disposition to have as much as possible of the world without altogether losing one's religion.
- (b) And experiments have been tried fitfully; more prayers, new devotions, a rule of life, renewed resolutions, or religious excitement: things helpful in themselves, and found helpful by others, but powerless here because the disease is not healed. There has been no casting of self wholly upon God with a consequent cure of the root evil.
- (c) And so the life has never yet been set free to serve God with undistracted power and in vigour of health. How strangely we do potter about with spiritual quackeries, keeping Christ in the background of our lives as required to save us from hell, but not realized as the present healer of diseases!

III.—*Self the great drain upon life.*

- (a) The poor woman's disease was one which, whatever were her necessary occupations, kept her life largely self-centred. She had spent her substance upon herself, and became worse rather than better. This self-life is the greatest impediment to the Christian realization, whether mystical or social.
- (b) The individual life can only grow rightly so far as it is free from this self-centredness by the healing touch of Christ, whatever be its particular development. The more contemplative life must grow in pure love of God and not in attachment to its own experiences; the more active life must grow in love to God through love of its neighbour. The self-centred life grows worse in proportion to what is spent upon it.
- (c) Symptoms of this disease may be detected in the varied forms of the burden of self, whether impelling one to escape by distraction, or by the self-will which mars good actions, or by the worry of spiritual anxiety. One looks for a specific sin or an evil habit, and fails to see that the root evil is simply in the self.

The Crowd

TWENTY-FOURTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"She came in the press behind."—S. Mark v. 27.

Picture : the woman in the crowd.

Pray : for those who have great difficulties in vital religion.

I.—*The crowd round Jesus.*

- (a) All are attracted by him, yet superficially for the most part, and without much knowing what they seek. The world is indeed well disposed : it is a mistake to think it inimical, or even indifferent. But it does not know what it wants, nor has it any conviction that he has anything certain to give. It follows.
- (b) This has its effect upon us. Some are put off by the crowd, realizing its essential inappreciation and failure to understand. Others never get through the crowd, but are content to be of it, not seeing any radical distinction between it and the disciples. To see the crowd is an impediment ; it is the respectability and conformity of public opinion and church-going.
- (c) But the crowd can be pressed through, if there is sufficient purpose, until one reach Jesus himself. But there must be a conscious need and a confidence in his power to satisfy it, or one will lack this purpose. Many like to think about Jesus, and to hear of him, who do not strongly desire to see him, and still less are determined to make definite request of him.

II.—*The crowd may be within us.*

- (a) The crowd which makes it difficult for us to get into living touch with Jesus need not be the respectable externalism of religious adherents ; it may also be a crowd within ourself, for it is not spatial touch which vitalizes but the touch of personality. This crowd is realized in the formality and distraction of prayer or worship which is conventional.
- (b) More especially it is found in conflicting interests and motives, in material and worldly distractions, in only partial surrender where it is not as with S. Paul, "This one thing I do." Such an one at times sees Jesus not far off, at other times does not desire him, and again seeks him and cannot get at him.
- (c) But mark that singleness of purpose characterized this woman because she knew of her issue of blood. This self-knowledge enabled her to push through the external crowd of men, and saved her from the crowd of conflicting interests which dissipate singleness of determination. Many are beset by great difficulties through unsteadiness of purpose, and from faint-heartedness ; they are content to be in the crowd, because Jesus is in it.

III.—*The usefulness of the crowd.*

- (a) It is easy to abuse the crowd, but at least it provides the opportunity of knowing more of Jesus. And this woman would not have dared to approach otherwise ; she hoped to get through the crowd unseen, and to touch him privately. The conditions, under which each of us must make his personal acquaintance with him, are those which he has provided. It is unbelieving to abuse the difficulties which beset our progress.
- (b) And the crowd roused her energies : she thought that she was doing just what they were doing. She could not fight her way through, but she could squeeze and press at much inconvenience lest she should fail while others succeeded. She did not know that her vital faith distinguished her from the others.
- (c) Nor did she at all know that as she slowly made her way against the pressure she was being drawn by him whom she sought ; that he had distinguished her and would not let her fail. Her faith, although strong, was as yet very mixed, and her perseverance was required to bring her on to the final stage of her development.

Touching Jesus

TWENTY-FOURTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Who touched me?"—S. Luke viii. 45.

Picture: the woman and Jesus.

Thank God: for the reward of persevering faith.

I.—*The crowd presses: faith touches.*

- (a) She touched but his clothes timidly while the crowd pressed at all sides. It is the great and eternal contrast between externalism, institutionalism, and vital personal religion, even of a timid sort. He distinguishes at once between the touch which seeks something from him, and the pressure of the onlookers and the curious crowd.
- (b) There were many who seemingly pressed him much more closely than this woman who sought to be hidden, and who would have stolen her blessing unknown to him even. Not the ostentatiously religious, the spiritually confident, the busy workers in his service, necessarily touch him as did this timid, persevering woman with a great need and a strong purpose.
- (c) They pressed: she was healed. They looked on, and desired nothing but the satisfaction of their curious feelings and excited interests; and their desires were satisfied. She, too, desired and was satisfied. They were interestedly speculative about him, and would like to see what he could do; she put all to the test of her own case, and found the reality of his power.

II.—*What was her touch?*

- (a) Do not think that the faith which she exhibited was beyond measure great. It was, indeed, rather ignorant and superstitious. She thought that she could steal her cure, and that his power was involuntarily communicable through his clothes. But it was simple and honest, not condescending nor speculative nor curious; and above all things she wanted something from him, and needed it greatly.
- (b) And her touch was one of hopeful effort after having given up. She had spent her substance, and found the uselessness of professing solutions; now she came in the emptiness of poverty, with nothing. A last hope; not indeed a forlorn hope, or she would not have pushed her way through the crowd; but just as certainly not a conviction which knew that he was willing her to himself.
- (c) And it was a personal touch. The others pressed as members of a crowd; in her touch was individuality. And so, too, she must get into touch with him in some way. To stay in the crowd never suggested itself as sufficient, while she might bemoan her lot and wish that it might be lightened.

III.—*"Who touched me?"*

- (a) Mark the detachment of Jesus. He was on his way to heal a ruler's daughter, but he must stop for this poor woman. He was hampered by an uncongenial crowd, but the pressure did not hide the timid touch on his garments. It illustrates the forwardness of divine mercy: "Before they call I will hear."
- (b) She touched the hem of his garment: he says, "Who touched ME?" Many others touched his garments, but it was not such a touch. There are those who think that sacramental approach to Jesus is an indirect and superficial touch. Surely this woman may help us to understand some mystery of vital communication with his person through his garments!
- (c) His question helps to place faith and grace in their true position. She had not more faith in putting out her hand to touch him than in pressing through the crowd: yet she was not healed until his grace was communicated to her. That which went out of him healed her; nothing went out of him to the crowd. Yet he ascribed the healing to her faith. We may apply this thought also to the sacramental touch.

Christian Cheerfulness

TWENTY-FOURTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Giving thanks unto the Father."—Col. i. 12.

Picture: a cheerful Christian: a gloomy Christian.

Resolve: seek cheerfulness based on the principle of the supremacy and goodness of God.

I.—*The words and the Colossians.*

- (a) Consider S. Paul's balance of mind. Some people are up or down; it is all a matter of feelings. Now S. Paul was governed by a creed. He believed in God—*le bon Dieu*. He was not up or down according to the state of the weather, or the last bit of disappointment or good news. He believed in God the Father, and looked about him to see his doings.
- (b) The Colossian danger made him perhaps more conscious of God's grace to them, both in hope and warning. How wonderful it was that his grace should have taken hold of them, and have brought them into light out of their Orientalism! How joyous to think of this Gentile Church, the fruit of his disciples, and not the work of his own mission.
- (c) And his words were to the point. God the Father was all this to them: it was he who would enable them to walk worthily and to be fruitful, who would strengthen them. Of course he would: why otherwise had he brought them out of darkness? So what need for the Colossians to seek for intermediaries, and to try to keep God far off and inaccessible?

II.—*"Who hath made us meet."*

- (a) The meaning of the words may puzzle us, but no Christian will misinterpret them so wildly as to suppose that the Colossians were already perfected in grace. We may have applied them to baptism; they are in thought not unlike S. Paul's words in 1 Tim. i. 12. What Almighty God does he does thoroughly: he qualifies for his service by the act of his choice.
- (b) The words may be illustrated from 2 Cor. iii. 6. It is a good anti-pelagian consideration, calculated to stir up our devotion. You are a poor incapable sort of person: do not say you cannot be a Christian. It is blasphemy. God qualified you: it was his doing, and he did it. He did not put you into a false or impossible position. He fitted you for it by himself doing it.
- (c) Giving thanks for this: the Colossians, not S. Paul. And strengthened with all might unto joy (ver. 11). One would think so indeed, except that one forgets what God has done, is doing, and is ready to do. Meditate more on the might of his glory, and worship him therein. Think less of what you have to be and to do, and more of what it is to be made powerful with his power. It is not sufficient to say that I suppose this is true; it is as true as the incarnation and the atonement.

III.—*"To be partakers in light."*

- (a) The simile is ultimately based on Canaan (verses 12-14). To obtain the portion which consists of the lot, the allotted part of the inheritance. The words are literally, "Who sufficed us unto the part or parcel of the lot." What is the parcel in regard to the whole inheritance is the lot in regard to the individual possessor.
- (b) This makes "saints" clear. The Christian society is the saints. It is the fellowship of the true Israel in the Church of Canaan in contrast with the surrounding nations of the world. And this fellowship is a solid fact in contrast with the previous existence as slaves under Egyptian tyranny. God's redemption lies in between the two experiences, and the fellowship is the state of redemption.
- (c) This fellowship is in the light. A thought full of rich meaning to them, coming out of heathenism. But is light only pleasant by way of contrast with darkness? Cheerfulness comes from living in the light, spiritually and morally. Why will Christians try to shut themselves off from the light of God's countenance? Read 1 S. John i. 5-7, "These things write we unto you that your joy may be full," says S. John.

Laughing Jesus to Scorn

TWENTY-FOURTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"They laughed him to scorn."—S. Matt. ix. 24.

Picture: the scene in Jairus' house.

Pray: for faith in the Christian verities.

I.—*Jairus' daughter.*

- (a) "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth." The Christian's confident hope of the faithful departed is very different from the emotional instinct which likes to think of the dead as still alive. That we pray for the holy dead as members of our Christian family is a thing to be laughed to scorn as without evidence and highly improbable: but we have the resurrection of Jesus Christ and his teaching.
- (b) The Christian belief in grace lying dormant is a like subject of scorn. The world sees the fruit of grace without immediate association with the sacraments, and does not connect them. To believe profoundly in grace appears to many as a mark of a superstitious mind which clings to a worn-out mediævalism.
- (c) Science continually illustrates the truth—not dead, but sleeping; while in the spiritual world men are slow to believe it. And the problem of sin illustrates it. Those who do not believe in spiritual birth will also not believe in the "infection of nature through the natural corruption of the nature of every man" (Article ix.).

II.—*"They laughed him to scorn."*

- (a) In these illustrations we have examples of the world's self-satisfaction in its knowledge. The world is often quite sure of what is not known naturally. Beware when the world says "This will not do," or "That was all very well once, but is dead now." We have even been told many times that Christianity is dead.
- (b) There was one time of all others when they laughed him to scorn. At his crucifixion it is inevitable that he must leave the apparent victory with them, and could offer no reply. Learn therefrom his sympathy with us if we are laughed to scorn and can make no reply.
- (c) The New Testament speaks clearly of the souls which yet await their bodies, of the last stage—the redemption of the body. We might be tempted to-day to disregard such words as due to the limitations of the apostles, were it not for the nature of the Incarnation, and the true humanity of Jesus Christ. But the world will laugh such evidence to scorn.

III.—*He took with him Peter, James, and John.*

- (a) The world cannot see miracles, and the evidence for them can be explained away. Jesus Christ has taught us much by taking only the disciples into that room. We must go on unmoved, and have our fellowship with the disciples. It is only the Christians who can be taught the lesson of Jairus' daughter.
- (b) And the world is right on its own estimate. Reduce life to that which can be proved by material science, and all that Christians hold dearest has disappeared. The apostles did not make men Christians by convincing them of the resurrection of the body; they presented Christ, and he opened their eyes to see a wider world; and the person of Christ carried conviction of the resurrection.
- (c) But now the world has accepted Christ on its own terms. As Judaism failed to enlarge its Messianic hope, but reduced Christ to its limits, and thereby lost him, so the world reduces Christ to its own interpretation, and then finds in him no revelation or convincing proof of the oneness of life here and for ever in him.

Satisfied in Heaven

TWENTY-FOURTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."—Ps. xvii. 15.

Picture: the saints with fellowship and activity greatly increased by their spiritual sight.

Pray: for a clearer perception of the reality of their life.

I.—*"We shall be like him, for we shall see him even as he is"* (1 John iii. 2).

- (a) The words may suggest to us that the full vision of him will change us into his likeness. The final vision, when the illumination is perfected, will be the great opening of the eyes. Eliminate the thought of material sight, and consider that of the pure in heart.
- (b) Consider that it is written that no man can see God and live. The symbol of fire will help; it must burn up and kill, or illuminate and purify and finally, when the subject is purified, penetrate him entirely with its holiness and love. The saints walk in the midst of the fire and have no hurt.
- (c) The psalmist's "likeness" (or "form") is not to be identified with St. John's "We shall be like him" (Christ). The latter speaks of Christ's ascended humanity as that to which the saints are conformed; the former is nearer akin to the beatitude of the pure in heart, it expresses the confidence that when we are able to see God we shall be satisfied with him. Conformity to Christ is the condition of seeing the King in his beauty in that far-stretching land of inexhaustible delight (Is. xxxiii. 17, R.V.).

II.—*Heaven as the unitive way.*

- (a) Consider that the saints are what in the will of God we are destined to be; "Called children of God," to be such because made such. Consider too that every soul in purgatory is to be—must be some day—a saint, and that his life is the continual illumination of this blessed fact. Try, so far as possible, to eliminate the idea of time from association with the faithful departed.
- (b) Consider these stages from the side of holiness; first cleansed, the will fixed, habits of sin broken off. Then, even the effects of sin removed, the will not only confirmed in steadfastness but filled with all the grace of God and perfected, and that to consummation.
- (c) Now is the perfection of the unitive way, the beatific vision. Imagination is too stunted to grasp this. Kindle it by proposing considerations to the mind. Is there any place for remembrance of past sin, in a realized joy of praising him as Saviour, for all that he has done? Consider the progress of the saints in heaven: God is still infinite to them, and a progress in perfection is part of the perpetual satisfaction with his likeness.

III.—*Satisfied.*

- (a) It is a mistake probably to suppose that "satisfied" implies no more desire; it suggests rather an infinite progress of desire by growing powers of appreciation, always satisfied at each stage. God himself, the great satisfaction, which will never grow weary, for his mercies even then will be new every moment.
- (b) Nor is the satisfaction to be thought of solely as contemplation. Heaven is to be pictured as an activity, without the failure of self's intrusion, or of unproductiveness. The activity of development finds scope in activity of service. In these thoughts the angels help us; not all their service is, as we now should judge, productive; but they do not find it unproductive who are illuminated by the wisdom of God's purposes, and can see his satisfaction while they serve him.
- (c) Satisfied also in the realization of fellowship. The unitive way, as we have considered it, is the final union according to the will of God, the gathering of all in himself, a union of fellowship. In him all are harmonized; all seen in him as one. "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be."

Patience with Limitations

TWENTY-FOURTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"The revelation of Jesus Christ."—Apoc. i. 1.

Picture: S. John in Patmos receiving and recording the revelation.

Resolve: patience with the limitations of yourself and of others.

I.—*The revelation.*

- (a) The words look as if they said, the unveiling which Jesus Christ made. This is suggested by the words, "Which he gave." Thus we have God the author, Jesus Christ the mediator of the revelation, his angel the agent of its communication, John the recipient. In such way the word is interpreted when we use it as the title of the book, and we realize that the revelation is of the spiritual vision of the Church.
- (b) But the words may be the unveiling of Jesus Christ; and then we turn primarily to the vision of the ascended Lord (i. 12-18), which is subsequently related to the experiences of the seven churches. In this case the words are to be read in this way—God granted the unveiling of Jesus Christ to him to show to his servants, namely, an unveiling of things shortly to come to pass.
- (c) The same ambiguity attaches to S. Paul's language in Gal. i. 12, 16. The student will weigh the alternatives; but devotionally the two interpretations may be considered in harmony. Every unveiling made by Jesus Christ must involve a fuller unveiling of himself to us. Consider how one should learn of him through the unfolding of his will to us in the experience of life and its crises, or by the lessons which he speaks to the heart.

II.—*Limitation.*

- (a) The book begins by calling itself an apocalypse (revelation), and it strongly partakes of the character of what is known in Jewish writings as an apocalypse. But it is couched in the form of a prophecy (Rev. i. 3; cp. xxii. 6, 7). And yet the apocalyptic prophecy is set in the form of an encyclical letter such as S. Paul wrote. There are the letters to the seven churches (Rev. i. 4; xxii. 21).
- (b) S. John was attempting a new literary venture, and he, like any one else, was unable to shake himself free from the literary precedents which lay to hand. Jewish literature gave him prophecy and the apocalypse: S. Paul gave him the private and non-literary letter elevated and developed by the theme and by the wider circle to which it was addressed.
- (c) Reflect upon this literary limitation, and do not be impatient with yourself or with others. Great allowance must be made for surroundings, the influence of occupation and line of thought. Make good use of the lessons which God teaches you, striving to understand one thing well rather than despising the smallness of your sphere, or the narrowness of your surroundings.

III.—*The Church on earth.*

- (a) It is more often in regard to the Church that one fails to learn the lesson of limitation. Almighty God knows quite well that the very meaning of time and space is limitation, and that his Church on earth is within the limits of time and space. The Churchman is not most catholic who strives to separate himself from his fellows and their limitations, but he who is most devotedly parochial, loyally diocesan, genuinely twentieth century and thoroughly English.
- (b) A study of the letters to the seven churches reveals how very local is their treatment. S. John seems at times to identify the life of the city with the character of the Church. To be without limitations is to be colourless. And the Church must face such conditions of time and space. English, French, German and Spanish Christianity must all express Christianity differently, and the twentieth century differently from the sixteenth or the sixth.
- (c) Let a broad and divine charity possess you in your criticism of others. They too have their limitations. We are tempted at times to think that "real Church people," "our bishops and clergy," ought to forget that they are living in one country and in a particular generation. The Catholic Church includes all centuries and all countries, but it does not confuse them.

Ephesus—the City of Change

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

“Else I . . . will remove thy candlestick.”—Apoc. ii. 5.

Ephesus: the city of change.

Pray: for stability of character and for love.

I.—*The responsibility of opportunity.*

- (a) Ephesus by situation was practically the leading city of Asia, although not the official capital. It is addressed as such: the vision of the ascended Lord (chap. i. 12-18) is represented by details which are reproduced in the letters to the churches; but it is Ephesus which holds the central position. “These things saith he . . . who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks” (cp. i. 20).
- (b) Ephesus was on the main road; there were many passers-by. Once Ephesus used to sift them, does so still in fact (ii. 2, 3). And while other churches are blamed for tolerating error (ii. 14 f.; 20 ff.), Ephesus hated these deeds. There was, however, a lack of stability in the Church. Once the method of sifting was by endurance (vv. 2, 3); now the true spirit of fervour had changed into a coolness of orthodoxy which knew only how to hate (vv. 4, 6).
- (c) This past of faithfulness is dwelt upon, because all that Ephesus has to do is to repent and do the first works. It is not the zeal against error which is condemned, for the speaker adds, “Which I also hate”; but “Thou hast left thy first love.” Controversy often has this effect.

II.—*Causes of change.*

- (a) Ephesus was the city of change: time after time her site had altered, and her natural conditions changed; sea and land shifting. The writer sees a parallel between this changeableness and the Church, which had left its first love. Once it was “For my name’s sake,” but now she is fallen, and must repent and do those first works of labour and patience and bearing and not fainting.
- (b) This character was ruining the Church. It was noble, and not unworthy, but lacked the power of loving and being loved. The one stability was hate; “Thou canst not bear them that are evil” (ver. 2); “Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans” (ver. 6). Thus the letter is laudatory, but not full of warm sympathy as the letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia.
- (c) So change is threatened to the changeable city. The candlestick was to be removed to another place; the Church was to be moved. The site of the city has shifted again about three kilometres; but the city remained important until comparatively recent times. The Church councils of Ephesus curiously bear out this early character of an orthodoxy zealous in hate.

III.—*Punishment and blessing.*

- (a) The warning was of removal, which would give yet another opportunity. The blessing, which was for the individuals, was to quicken and re-invigorate their heavenly life. The punishment might fall, and yet “to him that overcometh” the blessing was to be given. In any case the ascended Lord was doing all that he could for the Church; it was their fault if the opportunity could only come through punishment and not through the quieter forms of grace.
- (b) The first reward of “overcoming” takes the reader back to the very opening of the Old Testament. It was thus a Jewish symbol; but all the Christians would be familiar with it, and the heathen converts would appreciate it from their associations with sacred trees. The Church which had left its first love was to go back to the beginning—to the Garden of Eden, the paradise of love.
- (c) The Church which is losing love from its religion is bidden go to the tree of life. “Pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity . . . without which whosoever liveth, etc.” The orthodoxy which can hate and not love is bidden learn of the Blessed Sacrament the power of love, and be fed on its gift of love.

Smyrna—the City of Life

TWENTY-FIFTH MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

“Be thou faithful unto death.”—Apoc. ii. 10.

Smyrna: the city of life.

Pray: for persevering faithfulness.

I.—*Was dead and yet lived.*

- (a) The history of Smyrna confirms its character. For four hundred years it was dead; yet through this long period of history as a mere set of villages it lived. The writer is devoted to this coast town. It and Philadelphia are unreservedly and heartily praised; and these two cities were the last to yield to the Mohammedans. The language is strikingly different from the correct but unsympathetic praise given to Ephesus.
- (b) The speaker is the Son of Man, who was dead and lived (ver. 8). He is the crucified and risen Lord. In his endless life he appears to the faithful city, which is to be honoured by its persecution. The First and the Last will be with them throughout, and in the end will crown them with life.
- (c) It is the picture of progressive life. Life through death, the sacramental death to sin, and the continual mortifying of the corrupt affections; with no share in the second death (ver. 11). Sardis presents a painful contrast, as the city which has a name that it lives, and is dead (iii. 1).

II.—*Poor and rich.*

- (a) The writer loves to mark the reversal of human contrasts. The Christian community was poor, and the rich Jews of Smyrna boasted that they were the people of God; but to the writer the Christians were rich, and the Jews were no longer God's synagogue. The Christian must learn to make his estimates in this way.
- (b) Poor they may have been, but persevering faithfulness is great riches. It is Laodicea, the church which shared with Sardis the unrelieved censure of these letters, that boasted of being rich, and needing nothing (iii. 17).
- (c) And the city was to be persecuted. Persecution is not punishment. It is a sign of life. Ephesus, Sardis, Laodicea have no persecution; but Pergamum has its Antipas, and Philadelphia is a missionary Church, and Thyatira was a struggling community. “Blessed are they that have been persecuted.” Its reward is the crown of life.

III.—*Faithful and crowned.*

- (a) Smyrna was faithful in her city life as well as in her Christian history. She was loyal in her allegiances to man and to God. The Romans had found her faithful, the end of the first century found her faithful: the rising power of Islam found her faithful and loyal too. Here also lies S. Polycarp, who served God faithfully to old age, and would not deny his Lord.
- (b) For such a Church, alive, is the reward to be the crown of life. Her life came truly from him who died and lived. Life out of his life. The “crown” of Smyrna was the expression of the heathen writers to describe the appearance of the city as seen by one approaching it from the sea. It is he that endureth temptation who is to receive the crown of life; and to suffer persecution is a sure proof of God's love (Jas. i. 12). The persecuted and the missionary cities are the two with which the crown of life is associated (iii. 11).
- (c) In this second letter the writer proceeds to the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. xix. 24; Apoc. xxi. 8). The faithful in this Church are not to suffer the second death. The short persecution might produce a martyrdom, but that would only be the crowning of life. Mark, too, that the writer in all these letters regards the Christian community as the heart and soul of the city; its members are its life, however poor and insignificant. To him the whole city, with its history, and situation, bespeaks the character of the Church.

Pergamum—the Royal City

TWENTY-FIFTH TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"But I have a few things against thee."—Apoc. ii. 14.

Pergamum: the royal city.

Pray: for correspondence with special gifts of grace.

I.—*The sword with two edges.*

- (a) The site marked out Pergamum for a great fortified town; its rocky hill dominated the broad plain. Its kingship was already old when it was handed over to Rome, and for 250 more years served as the official capital of provincial Asia. A temple dedicated to the imperial cultus was early established here, and the city was three times honoured as "temple-keeper" (cp. Acts xix. 35) before any other city acquired this imperial favour. It was a city which to the writer was "Satan's throne."
- (b) The two-edged sword was the cut and thrust sword of the Roman army. Its mention has reference to the power of life and death, which had already been experienced by Antipas, and presumably by other Christians too. It was a great spiritual privilege to be a Christian in Pergamum.
- (c) This two-edged sword was tongue-shaped, and the ascended Son of Man is represented as having such a sword in his mouth (i. 16). He eclipses the imperial power in its two-fold capacity of religious and civil authority, for he, too, can use his sword (ii. 16). See Isa. xi. 4; Apoc. xix. 15. A word of his mouth can do more than the whole armies of the Romans (Heb. iv. 12).

II.—*A few things against thee.*

- (a) This Church stands in the middle place together with Thyatira; put in a position of great peril and responsibility, it had the magnificent opportunity of martyrdom; and corresponding to such an honoured post of danger is the magnificence of the reward. But repent—else the sword which should fall on the persecutors will fall on the faithless in the Church. Such is the power, however, of noble response to God's grace that it may avert evil from the Church (cp. vv. 13 and 16).
- (b) Here and in Thyatira the danger is of compromise within the Christian Church: laxity within the Church will not leave it strong to stand firm where Satan's throne is. Yet, in spite of the heroic lives of the faithful there was a party of Nicolaitans errorists in teaching and morals, playing with a dangerous compromise even with the heathen society. The writer compares them with the later history of Balaam (Numb. xxv. 6 ff.; xxxi. 8 ff.; cp. Josh. xiii. 22), who also was slain with the sword (Numb. xxxi. 8).
- (c) So serious a warning to a Church with the prospect of such blessings is a valuable reminder that to whom much is given of him will much be required. To the Pergamene Christians it must be Satan's throne or God's throne. If they overcome they are to be exalted above the Emperor; if they resist the world-power they are to share the fellowship of the true witness (i. 5; ii. 13).

III.—*Manna and the new name.*

- (a) The manna was hidden in the ark, and the ark was traditionally supposed to be hidden (2 Macc. ii. 5 ff.). The Eucharist is set over against the pagan feasts, in which the Nicolaitans dared to join. Hidden indeed is the Eucharistic manna, that substance and virtue of the sacrament. Deep hidden indeed is the manna to be brought by the Messiah to him that has final perseverance in this world's conflict.
- (b) For those that hold fast "My name" (ii. 13) is a new name waiting, higher than the name Augustus: a new name, telling of secret fellowship with the Lord upon his throne more intimate than present experience can fathom (end of ver. 17); a fellowship of faithful witnesses (ii. 13) with the Faithful Witness (i. 5). And a fortunate stone, more durable than the city's parchment (pergamentum), more potent than the heathen magic pebbles with their mystic names.
- (c) The writer advances to the wilderness days, the manna and the history of Balaam. And perhaps there is a reference to the sacred name Jehovah (Exod. vi. 2-3). And it is they, to whom these promises are held out, who must repent, because of the presence of the laxists. The life of the faithful is to some degree responsible for the worldliness of part of the Church.

Thyatira—Weakness made Strong

TWENTY-FIFTH WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts."—Apoc. ii. 23.

Thyatira: weakness made strong.

Pray: for deeper knowledge of him who searcheth the hearts.

I.—*The ascended Son of Man.*

- (a) Thyatira had to be a garrison city in an open country, a temporary check to an advancing army. Every enemy could take it, for it had no natural military advantages; and each conqueror must in turn make it a garrison city. Naturally weak, her military character made her strong.
- (b) Under the Roman peace her military defences were decaying, and the city was entering upon a period of trade prosperity. It was a city of gilds, especially the bronze gild and the dyers' gild (cp. Acts xvi. 14). The description of the Son of Man recalls, however, the military glory of the city: he has the irresistible strength of the army and the dazzling display of its appearance (i. 14-15; ii. 18, 27-28). And it prepares the reader for what is to follow.
- (c) The Son of Man (i. 13) is here for the only time in the Apocalypse "The Son of God" (ii. 18). The strength of the victorious Son of Man, under the conditions of humanity, is emphasized by the heightened title, which gives to those who hold fast "till I come" the strength that is irresistible (ii. 25-27).

II.—*Jezebel and her daughters.*

- (a) The city is nearest in character to Pergamum; if it is the more energetically praised, the unfaithful are more fearfully judged. Both cities still exist as flourishing towns. A Christian prophetic of social importance by her influence brought a social laxity into the Church, which, disregarding human weakness, tempted the Christians to play with their liberty, without a sense of fear, professing that they had penetrated the deep things of God, "as they say" (ii. 24; cp. 1 Cor. ii. 10).
- (b) From the wilderness days we have passed to the monarchy, with its rule over the nations, and the baneful influence of Jezebel upon the weak Ahab (cp. ii. 20, R.V. marg. "thy wife"). Here the immoral side is put before the idolatrous (ii. 20, contr. 14).
- (c) The symbolism of the vengeance is based on the social feasts of the trade gilds, with their heathen associations, and often ending in licentiousness and debauchery. Jezebel, who is beyond hope (ii. 21), is to change her soft couch of lasciviousness for the hard bed of torment; her followers, for whom there may be some hope, are to be killed, like the sons of Ahab. Thus the divine character will be revealed (ii. 23).

III.—*The promise to the faithful.*

- (a) "But to you" (ii. 24; cp. 19). In the life of devotion it is he knows most the power of God to help and reward who is most conscious also of the terrible power of holiness to revenge evil. The Christian, who thinks lightly of God's awful threats, has penetrated very little into the fellowship of the holiness of him who searcheth the affections and thoughts (ver. 23) as a miner traces the vein or a dog the footsteps (cp. Rom. viii. 27).
- (b) And the same awful power of holiness is to make the weak Christian strong. It is "her works" or "my works" (22 and 26); and there is no other burden (ver. 24 with clear reference to Acts xv. 28) than the necessary conditions of holiness; and the same power which punishes will make the victorious remnant share in the divine victory. The imagery is based on Ps. ii. The shepherd's club ("rule" is literally "shepherd" here, and in the Greek of Ps. ii.) was to beat off the wild beasts; both in the psalm and here the club is developed into the "sceptre" (Gen. xlix. 10), and the sceptre can prove to be the most destructive of weapons.
- (c) Once the Son of Man was offered the kingdoms of the world; but he waited till he should receive them of the Father: so he waits to give them to his sons when they overcome, that they may reign with him in glory. Thyatira, weakest of the seven, continually broken, is to rule as Rome alone ruled, breaking the nations in pieces. The new society is to be built up out of the fragments of the old world, as the final kingdom out of those that overcome in the Church. And not only to share Christ's rule but also to possess him, the morning star (ver. 28; cp. xxii. 16, and Numb. xxiv. 17).

Sardis—the City of Death

TWENTY-FIFTH THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

“A name that thou livest and art dead.”—Apoc. iii. 1.

Sardis: the city of death.

Pray: against all unreality in religion.

I.—A dead city.

- (a) One of the great cities of primitive history; “more like a robber’s stronghold than an abode of civilized men.” The master of Sardis ruled Lydia and the great Hermus valley. Inaccessible save for the neck of land on the south. It had to grow out beyond its impregnable rock, leaving the spur as an acropolis; hence its name is a plural (Sardeis).
- (b) But impregnable as seemed its natural strength, its rock was really mud slightly compacted and easily dissolved by rain; a true picture of natural strength. Through this double condition it was twice taken through surprise by an ascent up some crack, neglected in the over-confidence of the defenders. It did not watch; it did not stablish; and it was taken by surprise like a thief (iii. 2-3).
- (c) It was now practically a dead city: in the Roman peace its military advantage was not needed; Smyrna was preferred to it for the honour of a temple to Tiberius. And, like Laodicea, the city is now absolutely deserted. “Pretensions unjustified, promise unfulfilled, appearance without reality, confidence that heralded ruin.”

II.—The exaggeration of Ephesus.

- (a) The seven spirits of God, and the seven stars (iii. 1; cp. ii. 1). In Ephesus the love of enthusiasm was growing cold; here it was dead. Contrast weak Thyatira (ii. 19). Sardis, one of the seven in circuit from Ephesus, was also a centre for a large district of its own, the wide middle valley of the Hermus. Here was its responsibility, to be used or not used; but at any rate to be given account of.
- (b) Like Ephesus, she had begun well and cooled down (iii. 2). She had a name, but her things were ready to die, for her works were not fulfilled before my God. Works were not lacking, but they had no vigour or fullness. She must look back (ver. 3). This state has its parallel in many Christian lives which have now only a name; once they had reality and used the divine gifts. Look back *how* thou hast received; examine, and above all repent.
- (c) It had a faithful few who were watchful (iii. 4). In Pergamum the divine war was to be against the Nicolaitans, unless the Church repented (ii. 16): there was collective responsibility. Here the Church is dead, but the few faithful live as individuals, and the whole power of the speaker is theirs. The prominence of the seven spirits (ver. 1) is suggestive of the secret of life and death.

III.—Judgment and reward.

- (a) The thief comes not merely quickly (cp. ii. 16), but stealthily, as the climbers had entered the acropolis by night. The simile is based on our Lord’s words (S. Matt. xxiv. 43), as also to Laodicea (iii. 20-21; cp. S. Matt. xxiv. 33; xix. 28), the other condemned Church. It is noteworthy also that these two Churches alone are without reference to opposition or struggle: Smyrna and Philadelphia have the Jews, the other three have the Nicolaitans, and Pergamum has further, the seat of judgment.
- (b) Through unreality Sardis was slipping back to the pagan level of life; they had defiled their garments (ver. 4). Relapse. But there were a few who were worthy. They should walk in their festal robes in the heavenly city, their names publicly confessed (cp. Matt. x. 32) there in the list of living citizens (iii. 4-5), as the technical use of “names” (ver. 4) suggests.
- (c) The writer leaves the Old Testament at the monarchy; from the earthly kingdom he passes to the heavenly. Here he that overcometh has his name surely inscribed in the book of the living. But that word “overcome” has terrible sound for the unreal, and the lapsed: it suggests very possibly the strenuousness of the Greek games. But see S. John xvi. 33, for the way to overcome.

Philadelphia—the Missionary City

TWENTY-FIFTH FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"I have set before thee an open door."—Apoc. iii. 8.

Philadelphia: the missionary city.

Pray: for grace to use one's opportunities to the full.

I.—*History of Philadelphia.*

- (a) It lay at the upper extremity of a long valley which opens back from the sea, thence the road ascends to the long Phrygian plateau and the main country of Asia Minor. The imperial post road passed through it, and was here identical with the trade route from Sardis to Phrygia. Hence it was by situation a missionary city of trade.
- (b) It had been built as a city of hellenistic influence, which it propagated in the districts beyond. Early in the century it had been destroyed with other cities in a great earthquake; and the shocks which followed caused panic, so that much of its population lived outside the city (see ver. 12).
- (c) It had changed its name to Neo-Cæsarea in honour of the Emperor, who assisted in its rebuilding after the earthquake. Subsequently it changed its name under Vespasian to Flavia. The imperial temple of Germanicus was already fallen into decay. With this changeableness the Christians are contrasted (ver. 12).

II.—*Its Christian character.*

- (a) It is based on its natural history. Such is true character, as contrasted with an assumed appearance. The missionary city of trade and hellenistic culture was now the missionary city of Christianity. What Philadelphia was, other cities could have been, for they also had open doors, but hers alone is mentioned. For the simile see 1 Cor. xvi. 9; 2 Cor. ii. 12; Col. iv. 3. This door, which he had opened to them, shall be kept open because they used it (ver. 8, R.V.).
- (b) He who uses his opportunities is he who is faithful in little (ver. 8). The Jews are only named here and in Smyrna, the two most faithful cities, because in both a small body of Christians was bitterly opposed by them, stirred up by their vital Christianity. This independence of character was manifested also in the history of the city up to the end of the fourteenth century, though not materially a strong city. It is said that the Jews are to come in the cringing attitude of a beaten foe (ver. 9); and perhaps the clue to this is to be found in the "New Jerusalem" of ver. 12.
- (c) Although few, yet it is the whole Church as with Smyrna. Contrast Thyatira, and yet more violently Sardis. Not numbers but worth is the test of a Church's strength, and both here and in Smyrna there is the honour of being counted worthy to suffer. Unity and the power to suffer are great elements in missionary activity, and the missionary Church is defended by God (ver. 9). The whole spiritual vitality of the Church lay in the fact that its life was the evidence that "I loved thee" (ver. 9).

III.—*The message.*

- (a) The speaker is first introduced in words which have no parallel in chapter i. It is the glory of Philadelphia that she is like her Lord, holy and true (ver. 7). The Church is in contrast to the Jews, who belied their faith (ver. 9). The key of David expands the description of the Son of Man (i. 18) and adapts it to the character of the missionary Church (see Isa. xxii. 22).
- (b) Even the most faithful missionary must hold fast. The crown was already secure if the present gifts be retained (ver. 11); for not even this Church loses the stimulus to overcome. And the faithful Christian in the unstable city is to be made a pillar in the sanctuary of God (ver. 12). A candlestick may be moved (ii. 5), but the pillar is stable. The victor has his character fixed: there will be no more earthquakes, and going out of the city.
- (c) On the pillar is to be written a threefold name, a name which has the three characters at once of God, his Church, and Christ. The symbolism was not unintelligible to the readers; for "The name of my God" see Numb. vi. 27; "The name of the city" implies citizenship; "My own new name" points to the fuller manifestation of Christ's glory when surrounded by his perfected Church (see Phil. ii. 9).

Laodicea—the City of Compromise

TWENTY-FIFTH SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

“I will spew thee out of my mouth.”—Apoc. iii. 16.

Laodicea: the city of compromise.

Pray: that you may not be rejected.

I.—*The site of Laodicea.*

- (a) Situated at a critical point in the road system of the country, a strong fortress were it not for its entire dependence for water on an underground aqueduct extending for six miles outside the city. Judging from its advantages it should have been a yet more missionary Church than Philadelphia; but it did nothing even as a hellenizing centre.
- (b) Its situation gave it a commercial prosperity; it was a city of bankers and finance. The glossy black wool of its flocks was highly esteemed. Not far east of the city lay a temple with its famous school of medicine, and its Phrygian powder was a well-known salve. Its wealth may be judged by the fact that after its destruction by earthquake the city boasted that it had rebuilt itself without imperial aid (see vv. 17, 18).
- (c) Hierapolis boasted hot springs, which became luke-warm in their discharge over the cliffs right opposite to Laodicea. Thus, too, is described the severe rejection of the self-satisfied Church, which had not the scalding heat of enthusiasm, nor yet the plea of icy-cold untouched by the gospel (vv. 15, 16). “A tepid Christianity is nauseous to Christ.”—*Swete*.

II.—*Its character.*

- (a) Stands with Sardis as condemned, and shares with it the fate of entire desertion now. But Sardis has some who are praised (iii. 4 f.), and thus to some degree may be likened to Ephesus. Laodicea stands outcast, because neither one thing nor another. Verses 20–22 are a summary of the seven Churches rather than an address to Laodicea; while ver. 19 does, however, seem to modify the sentence to that Church, if she can yet be zealous. Whatever her fate, it will not be that God did not love her (and see ver. 19).
- (b) The speaker’s character is a guarantee to the truth of the message. He is the “Amen, Amen, I say unto you” of the gospels. Faithful and true by contrast with the Church and city. “The beginning of the creation of God” (cp. Prov. viii. 22; Col. i. 15, 18; and see Col. iv. 16).
- (c) Its colourless, characterless compromise, given up to commercial prosperity with its pride and materialism, is all that the writer can seize upon. “The city brags like a *nouveau riche*” (*Swete*). Even for his trenchant condemnation he borrows the waters from a distance; and the speaker has much less parallel than in other churches with the description in chap. i. (cp. i. 5).

III.—*Its condemnation.*

- (a) The city was ignorant of itself (ver. 17), being in his eyes essentially wretched and pitiable. He pours scorn on the Laodicean cloaks. It must buy of him gold refined by fire—the discipline of trial and persecution and poverty. Such things as he offers are not for the self-satisfied; they must be bought at the price of genuineness, and a conviction of spiritual poverty and nakedness in his sight. But as yet they were blind.
- (b) In the epilogue the writer completes his series of the heavenly kingdom. The faithful in Sardis are to walk in triumphant procession in the city, and be publicly confessed as citizens: those in Philadelphia are to enjoy the full life of membership, secure in their possession. The last soaring height is the pledge of co-partnership with Christ in his throne, an extension of the promise made to the twelve (iii. 5, 12, 21; S. Matt. xix. 28).
- (c) With ver. 20 cp. Cant. v. 2; but the thought is truly found in S. Matt. xxiv. 33, Jas. v. 9. The wealthy social feasts of such cities as Laodicea and Pergamum are contrasted with the communion of God anticipated in the Eucharist (cp. ii. 17).

(If there are twenty-seven weeks after Trinity, see weeks after Epiphany for twenty-sixth week.)

Present Depression and Opportunity

LAST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"And the desirable things of all nations shall come."—Hag. ii. 7, R.V.

Picture: the vision of the prophets that the Gentiles shall flock to Jerusalem, seen in the depressing condition of the temple ruins in the days of Haggai.

Pray: for faith to see the vision of God's mission for the Church.

I.—*The days of depression.*

- (a) When Haggai began to prophesy the returned exiles were terribly depressed; the hope of 18 years ago had faded in the realization of the miserable condition of the land and the thralldom of Persian rule. In such condition it was morally impossible to re-build the temple. We shall do no work for the Church of God if we are cast down.
- (b) The beginning of Darius' reign revived hope; the disturbances of his empire made Haggai look for the divine world-shaking which he believed to be the commencement of the Messianic age. It is not granted even to a prophet to foresee events; he can only interpret principles. The Christian, limited in his vision, can only see partially the workings of Almighty God in the conditions of his times. But he is stirred up to seize the opportunity by seeing God in history.
- (c) Haggai, mistaken in his historical perspective, was right in his message. This depression was not of God, but was impeding his purposes. They must rise up and build the temple—the duty which lay to hand—and then see whether God would not bless them. We must not expect the reward of service to be given in advance.

II.—*"The desirable things."*

- (a) In Haggai's view the Gentiles in this world-upheaval would turn to the restored temple and enrich it with their contributions. The prophet is not to be blamed that in his somewhat material view he was far from interpreting the real wealth of the promise. There are many divine promises which to-day we are not large enough to embrace.
- (b) But by rising to the vision which he was able to receive he fulfilled the purpose of God for his age, and prepared for the future which exceeded his ideals. Every act of faith is a sowing for a future harvest greater than we realize. It was the first stage in the preparation of restored Israel to be the missionaries of the world.
- (c) The visit of the Magi began a new unfolding of these words, and Christendom has not yet exhausted their meaning. The wealth of intellect, and devoted service still flows in from the Gentile world. The Jews of Haggai's days looked backwards. Haggai looked forward, and hence the value of his mission. To see in each age God's golden opportunity is to be his prophet, preparing for an unfolding future.

III.—*Present depression and opportunity.*

- (a) A spirit of depression numbs us: the Church is perplexed. We think that unbelief and indifference must make us wait for happier days. We are afraid lest we fail, and we gloomily say to ourselves that the catholic revival has spent itself. It is in such days that God's voice calls men to rise and prepare for the reception of the world's gifts.
- (b) The wealth of the world is ready to be poured into his temple if we do not forbid it by cramped faith and dim vision. The reconciliation of modern knowledge and consecrated reason is to endow the Church of this century if she is bold and full of faith: the social aspirations of humanity are to produce a new realization of Christian brotherhood, and the union of the nations an enlarged interpretation of the gospel of peace.
- (c) It is the great incentive to foreign missions. Every nation converted offers its contribution of wealth to the development of the Church. The revival of the scattered Christians in the East is the opening of the doors to the enrichment of the Church through the Mohammedans. Christianity will not be seen in its fulness until the Jews have brought their offering of service and theological thought.

Lessons of Grace

LAST MONDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Make the men sit down." "Gather up the fragments."—S. John vi. 10, 12.

Picture : the scene.

Resolution : thanksgiving for mercies.

I.—*"Make the men sit down."*

- (a) Consider the orderliness of grace. In human bounty, when unstinted, there is often to be found a certain recklessness, which manifests the self-indulgence of liberality. The divine bounty is indeed unstinted, but has not the wastefulness of self-pleasing. It is regulated and proportioned in its distribution.
- (b) Consider the discipline of grace. The men must sit down in order, and wait until the distribution was duly carried out ; then all were fed. A spirit of impatience will at times rebel against the discipline of orderliness, and the conditions of grace, misinterpreting the wisdom of the divine bounty by the undisciplined eagerness of their own minds. They would hasten where God acts slowly, would reject the measured life of grace, week by week, year by year. We should pray, "Feed me with food convenient for me."
- (c) The reception of grace. In quietness and obedience, prompted by confidence in the great teacher, they waited until the meal was given. Such is the law of the reception of grace. As the years of grace pass, we are more ready than formerly to sit down and receive. Lord ! I have nothing, and I am hungry : feed me, that the word which thou hast spoken to my heart may be nourished.

II.—*The meal.*

- (a) He made the meal like the Holy Communion, breaking and blessing the bread as he was about to do on the last night ; and then he fed them by the hands of his disciples. Now he makes the Holy Communion like a meal. It is part of the orderliness and seemliness of grace. As of old he prepared the faithful for the gift of the Blessed Sacrament by the multiplication of natural food, so he prepares us now by these conditions to realize some of the laws of grace.
- (b) The law of spiritual digestion, which requires a fit condition in the recipient, and then the spiritual food is assimilated silently and nourishes the life in health. And as the natural food requires exercise for its proper digestion, so the spiritual sustenance must be exercised by prayer which is the fruit of communion, and by daily life among the brethren who partake of the common meal.
- (c) In the natural life appetite is a sign of health, and is the result of due exercise after healthy food. In the spiritual life also digestion through exercise renews the spiritual desire for food. And as in the disciplined daily life one is ready for each meal, while not conscious of extravagant hunger unless the meal be delayed, so too the spiritual life in normal condition is ready for each heavenly meal, and learns by grace the times of reception.

III.—*"Gather up the fragments."*

- (a) The position of this Gospel gives to these words a particular application in the review of a year of grace. Grace is one ; it is only broken up for individual needs, and for distribution. So the years too are only fragments of eternity broken up for human requirements and distributed to us day by day for the fulfilment of their purposes in the exercise of grace.
- (b) We cannot gather up what has been lost by misuse ; we can gather up the "over and above," the remaining portions of the life of grace which he has blessed and broken for us. Do this, in the spirit of grace, making such a profitable gathering up as may fit us for a new year more of grace, and less of reliance upon natural strength and resolution.
- (c) And for this, reflect upon the divine estimate of grace. He could multiply five loaves for five thousand, and yet was careful that nothing should be lost. Let there be a reverent appreciation of the value of grace, and not a presumption based on its bounty. Let there be, however, a strong confidence in his supply, who supplieth liberally, but will not squander.

Dwelling in One's Own Land

LAST TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"*They shall dwell in their own land.*"—Jer. xxiii. 8.

Picture: the feeding of the five thousand in the wilderness (the Gospel)-

Resolve: to persevere in the life of grace.

I.—*The land of the restored Israel.*

- (a) The land of promise into which they had been brought from Egypt, was a land flowing with milk and honey. Typically it was the Christian's inheritance, entered through the baptismal waters of the Jordan.
- (b) But they deprived themselves of it by disobedience, and had been driven into exile. Now they were to be restored, and the promise is given of dwelling in it, although past experience has led them to regard their tenure as uncertain.
- (c) The history of Israel is repeated in the lives of most Christians. First brought out of Egypt, he has exiled himself to Babylon by wandering away from God: then brought back to dwell in his own land by the grace of conversion. Is he to dwell in it uncertainly, without sense of security? The promise goes forth that they shall dwell in their own land. The first grace of baptism is no longer remembered in the later grace of restoration to his lost inheritance (Jer. xxiii. 7, 8).

II.—*The wilderness and their own land.*

- (a) Here is the paradox of the Christian experience. While he makes this wilderness his home, there is no satisfaction in it: but as soon as he recognizes that he is a pilgrim, that as a Christian he seeks a better country, lo! God shows him that he is already in the better country, and he makes him to dwell in his own spiritual land here and now.
- (b) Grasp the fulness of the promise. Life to the Christian is no exile. The only exile is to wander from God. To exterior view he is in the wilderness of the world: in the hidden life he is all the while with Christ, and where he is, is the kingdom of God. "Whence shall we buy bread?" says the natural heart, yearning for substantial food: the Christian, who is dwelling in his own land in this wilderness, is fed by the hand of Christ. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 19).
- (c) And the promise is expansive. Not to be interpreted as though exhausted yet. The fulness of the promise is in its permanence—they shall *dwell*. It expresses the security of the Christian. There are many developing stages of attainment between the present and the great attainment. He goes from strength to strength. But it is always his "own land." He knows no home apart from the company of God.

III.—*The life of the devout communicant.*

- (a) Already in his own land, while yet in the wilderness. For him even "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." There is no starvation in the wilderness when Christ is there to feed his disciples.
- (b) And yet the communicant may forget the power of Christ to supply food convenient to him—even water from the rock, and manna in the desert,—and may starve himself while Christ is with him, turning his promised land into a wilderness. This is because he looks to find food from the wilderness.
- (c) And all the time he is in the land of plenty. Hungry and thirsty after righteousness, the Lord our Righteousness feeds them, not that every one of them may have a little, but as much as they will, till they are filled. And then there are the fragments that might be gathered up.

The Refiner's Fire

LAST WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY

"But who may abide the day of his coming?"—Mal. iii. 2.

Picture: a refiner of metal seated by his furnace, testing the quality and accepting or rejecting.

Resolve: to pay greater heed to the severe demands which God makes upon me.

I.—*Malachi's prophecy.*

- (a) He has pictured to himself the coming of the Messiah, who was to raise Israel to its national glory, as one who must cleanse, purge and purify Israel, by reason of its sins of faithlessness. The Sun of Righteousness, with healing in his wings, must come to a righteous people. "Who may abide the day of his coming?"
- (b) We are tempted sometimes to disparage the revelation of the old covenant, to contrast the law with the gospel, judgment with mercy, even to regard the gospel as an easy method. Do justice to the revelation of the old; it is the essential foundation; mercy is based on the righteousness of God; the new fulfils the old, it does not sweep it away. The gospel carries the demand of righteousness to its utmost limits.
- (c) He came. Amid outward circumstances not contemplated by Malachi, his words were none the less true. That coming in great humility was a fearful searching of hearts. "His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor." Many could not abide it; those who stood the test passed through the furnace, and in his hands were moulded. Malachi thought of gold and counterfeit; it was not for him to foresee one who should turn dross into refined gold.

II.—*The Christian application.*

- (a) We contrast two Advents, and apply these words to the second, losing their application to his first Advent. As the prophet looked forward to a great and terrible day, so we. And the language of the N.T. approves, by applying to the final manifestation of the Son the O.T. descriptions of the day of the Lord.
- (a) But the Bible does not markedly distinguish between the two Advents. The apostles seemed to think rather of the period after the Ascension as the end of the days; they looked forward to a speedy return as the consummation of one series in the great fact of the Incarnation; death, resurrection, ascension, the coming. That coming would be the great inauguration of the Messianic age.
- (c) So once again as in Malachi's days we, who live at the end of these days, take his words with full solemnity, who like him look for the day that cometh, that burneth like an oven, and learn as he did to believe in God's awful righteousness, and thereby perceive that the advent of Israel's King must be inaugurated by the cleansing and testing of the Israel of God.

III.—*The universal truth.*

- (a) The Messiah is come. He is here, and we live in the ushering in of his kingdom; he is now making the Church, sitting as a refiner and purifier of silver. As he comes in varied guise, in the lessons of each, in voices which increase as the days go by, he is testing the truth that is in us, sifting out the Pharisees who live on traditions, and the Sadducees who deny the spiritual in their absorption in the material.
- (b) The fact of the Church is a terrible reality. It is the refiner's fire, and we treat it as a comfortable ingle-nook. We are to live for the Church, love it, sacrifice ourselves for it, lay down our life for it; and instead of this we are satisfied to use its helps and its support, not fearing them or realizing that they are ours in order that we may do impossibilities, venture all, lose all. "Who may abide?" should be for us written over the very threshold of the Church.
- (c) There is a traditional saying of our Lord, "He that is near me is near the fire." This has an application to the meditation. Who may abide? He who gives himself into the power of the refiner that he may purge him in the furnace of his holiness.

The Hope of God's Promises

LAST THURSDAY AFTER TRINITY

"My soul hath longed for thy salvation; and I have a good hope because of thy word."—Ps. cxix. 81, P.B.V.

Picture: the psalmist, under the disappointment of the return from the exile, confidently looking forward to the fulfilment of God's promises.

Pray: not to lose the vision of God in the present experience.

I.—*Hope because of God's word.*

- (a) Consider the reliability of his word. God is not a man that he should lie, or a son of man that he should change his mind. We are so weak in faith as to need frequently to consider this; God seems to forget, and we are very impatient if he acts more slowly than we desire. So little do we understand how he is carrying out his will:
- (b) Consider the power of his word. He spake the word and it was done. Primitive religions laid great stress upon the magical power of words. A more enlightened knowledge of God finds no simile more suitable whereby to express his almighty power than that of the absolute *fiat*.
- (c) Consider the goodness of his word. "God said . . . and God saw that it was good." To conceive that his word can be other than good is to deny God. Yet how rarely are we willing to fall into the hands of God, if, by any chance, we can manipulate our own affairs!

II.—*Who it is that has this hope.*

- (a) He who has definitely put himself on the side of God. That is the whole position of this wonderful psalm, which boldly, almost defiantly, flings forth the glory of God's law, judgment, testimony, will, way, statute. One feels that the psalmist was uttering in every verse the profoundest conviction of his life in the face of all that had told against it in the apparent state of Jewish society.
- (b) He who is not suffering the strain of sacrifice or doubt, but is enjoying the freedom and elasticity of spirit which comes from the definiteness of his conviction. His is not hoping against hope, a hope which does not believe; it is the elevation of spirit which is his who has based his life upon the conviction of God, and has conformed his life to it.
- (c) He who is sufficiently detached from his own will to have found the rest of leaning upon the will of God, who knows that he always wins who sides with God. He has been through adversity, and the discipline of God's will, and now knows its goodness. His heart has been set at liberty, and he loves God's commandments.

III.—*What his hope is.*

- (a) He calls it God's salvation. He is not thinking selfishly, but he has identified his interests and longings with the fulfilment of the divine purposes. It is the kingdom of God's righteousness, of which he is assured, against the human schemes of society and the fabrications of Jewish polity based upon worldly principles.—Cp. the hymn, "Thy kingdom come, O God."
- (b) This hope has been realized, first, in the experience of his own life, and from this he has grown into the wider outlook. He has been in trouble, and before he was afflicted he went astray; but through his afflictions he has learned God's statutes. He has also suffered adversity, and the proud have afflicted him, but God has sustained him, and he has found peace in righteousness. There is not one word in this psalm of finding any rest in external worship, or in superficial observance of legalism.
- (c) His hope extends to the revelation of God to his people. He is not one who has turned to God in disgust at the exhaustion of pleasures, offering him a worn-out heart. But he brings the enthusiasm of a whole-hearted surrender and a full life of purpose, with all his Jewish aspirations, religious and national, expanded beyond the limits of his age into the eternal truth of life. He sees with God. Like the faithful in all ages he has seen the promises afar off, and declares plainly that he seeks a country, a *patria*, a city, whose builder and maker is God.

The Power of God's Word

LAST FRIDAY AFTER TRINITY

"No word of God shall be void of power."—S. Luke i. 37, R.V.

Picture: the Incarnation: God spake and the Incarnation was a fact.

Resolve: to look for the power of God's word in my life.

I.—*Nothing is impossible with God.*

- (a) We believe it conventionally. We even believe it energetically when some one says he does not believe in the Bible miracles. We can believe it fitfully in a panic, when there is nothing else to trust to: indeed, we are much like the double-minded man of S. James, who is only an extreme case of the man of little faith (S. James i. 6-8, R.V. marg.).
- (b) How different is this from Jeremiah (xxxii. 17 ff.), who bought the field in Anathoth on the eve of the exile! How different, too, was she to whom these words were said! Prayer is a very good test of faith in God's word. Consider what things you make mention of in prayer, and what things you never think of in connection with prayer. Consider, too, what things enter into your prayers, and about which you never expect anything to happen as a result.
- (c) But turn to the R.V. translation. The rendering brings fresh force to the well-worn words. We no longer think of the rash laughter of Sarah (Gen. xviii. 14-15); we think at once of the creation. God said, Let there be; and there was. All things have been created through the word of God; and no utterance, no speech of God, can fail. Not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without him. God give me faith!

II.—*Power.*

- (a) Time was when this was the characteristic of Christianity (Acts i. 8; iv. 31 ff.; Col. i. 11, etc.). And not only in N.T. times; it was the power of the Church which perplexed the world, and which made the world hate it. If the world does not fear the Church to-day it is because the Church has lost faith in the power of God and regards herself as an organized institution with rules and privileges rather than as the special sphere of God's word in grace.
- (b) The same is true of the moral law, which is also God's word, and shall not be void of power. Let the individual or the nation disregard it, and the power is felt. Men resent this to-day, as the Jews resented it in the later days of the monarchy; and they think that "society" is wrong, and that they must put it right.
- (c) Apply the words also to nature. The O.T. says that God has made it by his utterance: S. John says that all things were created through the Word (i. 3), and S. Paul says that the universe has been created through the Son of his love, and unto him as its goal, and coheres in him (Col. i. 16). The world is God's speech, and it is upheld by the power of his word (Rom. i. 20). Let his word be withdrawn and creation is not.

III.—*The power of his word.*

- (a) Revelation is the word of God, in nature, in history, in the development of religious ideas, as well as in the Incarnation. We may not think that we can receive the spiritual lessons of God while denying the revelation, which is the power. To attempt to follow the example of Jesus Christ, while denying his person, is to say that God's word is without power.
- (b) In the sacramental life of the Church this truth is enshrined. The Church is the sphere of the power of God's word in regenerate humanity. God speaks in sacraments; it is not merely that his words are used. Apply also to the written word, which to be of value to us must be his word spoken to the heart. Apply also to the word spoken in his name, and see that it is not you that speak (S. Mark xiii. 11).
- (c) Alas! we often put effort before power in our lives, regard our religion as a duty undertaken rather than as a life taken up by the divine word. Hence our lack of joy and calm, those most persuasive elements of Christianity. I must grasp the power, so that it produces in me brightness in the presence of much that is wearying, joyousness in the face of routine and duty, support in the life which is already sufficiently difficult.

The Blessed Sacrament the Power to Follow Christ

LAST SATURDAY AFTER TRINITY

"Come and dine. Follow me."—S. John xxi. 12, 19.

Picture: the meal on the beach.

Resolve: to use the Blessed Sacrament this Advent as a preparation for his advent to myself.

I.—*"Come and dine."*

- (a) It was the breakfast after work, and it was the preparation for the day's work. Jesus stood and called them out of the darkness of the night's toil to the refreshment of the morning. At the ending of the year and the coming of Advent picture life as the gradual dawning of the day. Life's toil is the preparation for the real work of life, and the entrance into that life is the refreshment of the soul.
- (b) The scene suggests the consideration of the Blessed Sacrament as the preparation of the soul for the life which is dawning, through its refreshment of the soul in the toil of this present life. We should be careful not to neglect either aspect. And the mode of the Blessed Sacrament helps us thus to unite the life of the night's toil with the morning which is coming; for we have the bread and wine of daily food, but the altar scene is heaven itself.
- (c) The feast was provided by Jesus himself; they contributed nothing but their own presence. Even the fish were not those which they had caught. Jesus came to them, and took and gave (ver. 13). Come thus to him who comes: take thus from him who takes for you; receive thus from him who gives. It will be so hereafter, when we shall have learnt how to receive. Learn now in the Blessed Sacrament to find him thus all sufficient.

II.—*The Blessed Sacrament the place of confidences.*

- (a) It was after this morning meal, which recalled past experiences of his breaking the bread, that the awe of the third appearance gave place to the intimacy of conversation. Peter's heart was opened by his gentle probing; the future was unveiled to him. The Blessed Sacrament is to have its history of confidences to those who will draw near at his invitation, with awe, knowing that it is the Lord.
- (b) Here fervour is renewed, and the past is not only blotted out, but so healed that one loses the sense of estrangement and constraint. Here the sinner learns to say, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Here S. Peter and S. John—he who boasted, loved and denied, and he who leaned on Jesus' bosom—find fellowship with one another in him. It is a foretaste of heaven's fellowship and openness of speech.
- (c) Here, too, is the place where each is fed with food convenient: the fishermen are fed with bread and fish. Peter is restored and commissioned to work, and enough is foreshadowed of his future to satisfy the spiritual eagerness of his love: here John is left, the contemplative, to tarry. There is no more monotony in the life on the eternal shore than here: each has his life according to his gift.

III.—*"Follow me."*

- (a) It was the old call. So began the Christian life, and so shall it be hereafter. To follow him until we grow up through the stages of spiritual experience from the earliest lesson, to follow him from the banks of Jordan, to follow him that we may become fishers of men, until we hear the same voice calling us into the life of the new day, either through Petrine activity or Johannine waiting.
- (b) The Blessed Sacrament is the gift of the grace to follow him here and hereafter. Here we find that we are not called to this Breakfast because we follow, but follow because we are nourished by his bounty. "So, when they had 'supped,' he said twice to S. Peter, 'Follow me.'"
- (c) The Blessed Sacrament combines the farewells to the two disciples: "Follow me," "Tarry till I come." They are the same charge. "Ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come"; and "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God."

The Mother of my Lord

FEAST OF THE B.V.M.

"The mother of my Lord."—S. Luke i. 43.

Picture: the greeting of Mary and Elizabeth.

Resolve: an Ave Maria, or the Angelus.

I.—*The virgin-birth.*

- (a) Criticism deals to-day severely with the historical narratives which surround the conception and birth of Jesus Christ. There is insufficiency of evidence; the narratives are improbable; there is no possibility of tracing their source to those, whom verily we would believe if we could know that they were responsible; the hymns of the Incarnation are not spontaneous nor altogether applicable.
- (b) This is not altogether an unbiased criticism. If we can believe in the virgin-birth there is no improbability in the narratives. And from the necessity of the case the testimony could only come by ecclesiastical tradition preserving the reports, given in later life, by the chief character. And, in particular, that the young maid, after the mystery made known to her, and which could not be revealed to others, and was yet calculated to cause her much distress and shame, should desire to visit her older relative who shared with her this revelation, is both seemly and natural. And the reception of the mother of the Lord by the mother of John Baptist is fitting.
- (c) To the Christian the virgin-birth is not a stumbling block to be received reluctantly, and only on the authority of the Church. It is even more than seemly and befitting in dignity. It is more reasonable to devout intelligence, and theologically more agreeable, than the alternative. Nor is there the faintest suspicion of reproach upon matrimony; for it is in all ages, and startlingly so to-day, the Church which reverences matrimony against a world which treats it with increasing disrespect.

II.—*The visitation.*

- (a) Learn therefore from S. Elizabeth how to think of the mother of the Lord. The older woman is conscious of the condescension of the younger, realizes that the greater has visited the less. And to this she is aroused by the unborn babe, whose office was so closely related to the unborn incarnate one. And she openly declares her sense of the honour conferred on her by the visit.
- (b) Learn to reverence the spiritual revelation of character manifested by the blessed Virgin in the unaffected simplicity and desire for human sympathy and human confidence in the great trial of her vocation. Here, indeed, is a temple made ready for the indwelling of the Lord of heaven and earth.
- (c) This visit is the first of innumerable visits which since that day the holy Mother, in the plenitude of her experience, has now on her part received from those who have delighted to call her blessed, and have sought her fellowship and help as mother, woman, wife, whether they be children drawn to her who nursed the holy Babe, or young men and women who have found in her the inspiration of purity, or parents who from her have received the vision of home life.

III.—*"The mother of my Lord."*

- (a) Those who can receive the revelation of the Church, its life and fellowship, cannot easily excuse the ignoring of her position. The apostles, indeed, have official relationship to the Church; hers is personal, while yet it is one deeper and more sacred even than theirs. How naturally does devotion to the blessed Saviour call forth devotion to her from whose body he took human flesh and birth!
- (b) Is not this, perhaps, a suggestion to us not to be impatient at the neglect of her? When English people have come again to believe in the sacraments, and not before then, may we hope for the Blessed among women to take her natural place in our hearts, and consequently in the public expression of our united emotions.
- (c) Meanwhile she has taught us by her life the lessons of obedience and submission. But in our private prayers and praises we are not thus restrained, and by our prayers we may help to win England to that Catholic faith in the full embrace of which she will again be loved and greeted by us all.

Blessed among Women

FEAST OF THE B.V.M.

"Blessed art thou among women."—S. Luke i. 42.

Picture: the scene.

Resolve: an act of devotion to our Lady.

I.—*The visitation.*

- (a) Mary had just received the most startling revelation with the simplicity of faithful and humble devotion to the will of God. She was not absorbed in herself. The revelation had made known to her that Elizabeth was about to be a mother. At once the young virgin journeyed from Nazareth to the hill country of Judah to congratulate her cousin. Mark the unselfishness of grace.
- (b) She, too, had received the promise of a son; the young virgin and the aged wife. Her own experience had given her a deeper interest in the hopes of Elizabeth: and Elizabeth's experience had a corresponding effect. Mary saluted Elizabeth, and Elizabeth responded with exultation. For three months they enjoyed the fellowship of the divine communications. Mark the sympathy of grace.
- (c) Mary visited Elizabeth to congratulate her on her joy; she gave no thought to her action as the manifestation of grace, and was in no way expecting the salutation with which Elizabeth received her. And consider the grace of Elizabeth's life, with no jealous thought that her gift of God was to be surpassed by the gift to this young cousin. Consider the unfolding of the life of grace.

II.—*The grace of S. Elizabeth.*

- (a) She had the spiritual gift to bear a child in her old age. Was she not like a second Sarah, a second Hannah who had prayed in the temple at Shiloh? But no pride marred her reception of the gift; at once she delighted to recognize the greater gift of her cousin. "Blessed art thou among women."
- (b) The two children in prospect were to be closely related in history, but Elizabeth's was to be only the forerunner of Mary's. But there is no jealousy. "The mother of my Lord" has caused the child to leap in her womb for joy. "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb."
- (c) Her husband had been overwhelmed at first by the angelic message, and he was still dumb. Mary would know that; but the wife's heart had no pang in it. She and Mary were in perfect sympathy. "Blessed is she that believeth that there shall be a performance of those things" (R. V., mar.).

III.—*"Blessed art thou among women."*

- (a) S. Elizabeth was thinking of the blessedness of being the mother of my Lord, and not of the personal sanctity of her young relative. Nor did Mary give any thought to her fitness for such an honour when she said that "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." But both realized that the chosen mother of the Messiah would hold a position of unique honour in the minds of all future ages.
- (b) It was her divine Son who directed attention to the greater glory which is hers, the glory of entire correspondence to so great a choice of divine favour. "Yea—but rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."

"Joy to be mother of the Lord,
And thine the truer bliss,
In every thought and deed and word
To be for ever his."

- (c) To be chosen for this Motherhood was an honour which required a unique spiritual preparation of grace, of which the virgin-womb was in one aspect merely a material appropriateness. In the virgin-birth lay indeed far more than a mere fitness: and yet, what were the virgin-birth without a life sanctified by grace to be the mother of that Incarnate offspring?

The Name Jesus and the Annunciation

FEAST OF THE B.V.M.

"And shalt call his name Jesus."—S. Luke i. 31.

Picture: the appearance of S. Gabriel to the blessed Virgin.

Resolve: to meditate more often on the life of Mary.

I.—*First occasions.*

- (a) The first mention of the holy Name is from the lips of the angel that stands in the presence of God (S. Luke i. 19). Consider the fitness of the agent to communicate his Name, who by his salvation was to make sinners fit to stand in the divine presence, who alone could bring salvation because he himself dwells eternally in the presence of God.
- (b) The first ears to hear this holy Name are those of the blessed Mother. Is any name dearer to us? And should we not think much of her who first heard it, and kept it in her heart and pondered over it? Consider with what love and devotion she was to whisper the name to her babe, making his infant ears familiar with it before his human intelligence was unfolded to its significance.
- (c) The first sight of the Incarnate life was flashed through the eyes of Mary into the reverent gaze of the angel, who "in the thrice great Name hailed thee, and Jesus to thy bosom came" (Keble). For she wore the likeness which he was to bear henceforth, in whom was no human resemblance to be traced other than with her.

II.—*The message.*

- (a) Well might Gabriel say "Fear not" (S. Luke i. 30), when he came with his unique greeting (ver. 28), to a lowly village maiden, who thought little of herself, and that little only in the most humble and modest way (see ver. 29). And his very appearance was calculated to startle her, were it not that in her piety she lived in the fellowship of God's holy ones.
- (b) So, too, had he said "Fear not" to Zacharias (S. Luke i. 13). The response in each case (vv. 18 and 34), seems alike; yet Zacharias was stricken dumb, while Mary was helped by Gabriel (i. 19, 20 and 35, 37). The dumbness of the one rebuked the hesitation of the priest who ought to have learned the lesson of Abraham and Sarah. It was a very pardonable hesitation, and the dumbness was an opportunity for silent pondering on his revelation. The response of Mary was not due to a spirit of hesitation (for see ver. 38) but to the modesty of a pure virgin.
- (c) In this message and the reception of the cherished name of Jesus we must see that Mary began her life of sorrows. She was already betrothed (S. Luke i. 27); her conception was to be joy through the deep sorrow of her betrothed's anxiety, a sorrow turned into unalloyed joy, when to him too was revealed the holy Name (S. Matt. i. 18-21).

III.—*The fellowship of the holy Name.*

- (a) From now Mary's life of fellowship with God took fresh development by reason of the hypostatic indwelling of her Saviour and God; and she cherished this revelation of the true import of him who was conceived by the Holy Ghost. In these nine months Mary was trained to be the teacher of the infant Jesus.
- (b) The feast of the Annunciation is the festival of the Incarnation, and it is on this day that the name Jesus was announced. To the shepherds "A Saviour" born was the making public of that which two mortals, bending over the Immortal in the crib, already knew. When we use the Holy Name we go in faith to the Incarnation and share with Mary the unique revelation.
- (c) It is with Mary that we share in the fellowship of Jesus: listen therefore to her, as after her long spell of exclusive fellowship she introduces him to the world to which he now manifests himself:—"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (S. John ii. 5).

Mater Dolorosa

FEAST OF THE B.V.M.

"A sword shall pierce through thine own soul."—S. Luke ii. 35.

Picture: Mater dolorosa.

Resolve: to shrink from no suffering which will give me closer fellowship with him.

I.—*The Annunciation.*

- (a) From the moment of the Annunciation, when the incarnate Lord entered into the holy Mother, she began to share in the mystery of passion, and from that time advanced in this experience. Her first conformity of will to her high privilege, and all that it involved, was expressed in the submission of her will in the words, "Be it unto me according to thy word."
- (b) There followed the months of secret joy combined with the burden of her life; an unmarried woman of pure conscience was with child. Conceive what she endured while Joseph was minded to put her away privily; and the rich reward when she knew that he understood. Consider what she endured in misunderstanding and shame from her neighbours, and again the rich reward in Elizabeth's greeting. She was reaping the reward of her act of faith.
- (c) The sword was beginning to pierce in other ways also. The secret joy had its secret distresses and anxieties. What was the history of the child to be, to whom the Lord God was to give the throne of his father David? With what fear must she have pondered over these words! And was not the Messiah to suffer much? Oh, what anxiety to a mother with child, to anticipate such future for her baby, so terribly great, so full of portent!

II.—*Fellowship and the sword.*

- (a) Consider the joy of holy Mary in the infancy and childhood of her offspring. No fellowship equal to that of the mother and her baby. He was all hers; no rival interest claimed him yet as he hung round her neck and received her kisses. What feelings were hers as she recognized herself in his face!
- (b) But the shadow of the cross is the condition of such fellowship. Simeon has voiced her reflections in words over which she pondered. At the age of twelve she realizes more keenly that he is to be separated from her as he develops into manhood (S. Luke ii. 42-51). Henceforth, as she watches him the truth of this coming separation is confirmed in her mind.
- (c) The beginning of his public ministry is a further piercing of her heart. At the wedding feast at Cana she feels that while still all-in-all hers, he has passed finally into the greater life of his mission which separates him from her. But she has grace to say, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

III.—*The fellowship of the cross.*

- (a) The disciples are close around him; other women minister to his needs, and she effaces herself. Once when she would see him she must hear the words, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father . . . the same is my . . . mother" (S. Matt. xii. 46-50). Did ever mother hear such words and understand them? What glory is hers, whose son could thus speak without fear of being misunderstood!
- (b) Dangers thicken on all sides; and there are greater dangers than the increasing physical alarms; dangers to faith when men think him mad, a deceiver, a blasphemer. What suffering when her Son is misunderstood, or when he is cast out of the synagogue! Yet all such sufferings are the price of progressing with the unfolding of his revelation.
- (c) The crucifixion, and she is there, faithful to the end, and with a mother's heart for one who never caused her pain. It is her Son who is thus dying, he whom she bore and nursed. To the bitter end she conforms; no merciful providence, as we might blindly think, has removed her by death. To the uttermost she glorifies God in her life of conformity, enduring to the end. And what reward! In this supreme agony, the Son speaks to his mother, and the word suffices. The Son could not do less: the Son needs not to do more. The piercing sword has been the way of fellowship.

Her one Word

FEAST OF THE B.V.M.

"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."—S. John ii. 5.

Picture: the blessed Virgin Mother and her one word to man.

Resolve: to remember her word.

I.—*The mother's word.*

- (a) Would that she had been more associated in men's minds with this one recorded utterance outside the holy family and her kinswoman. The nearest approach to any other word is the implied request to some men that she wished to speak with Jesus (S. Matt. xii. 46-47). We picture the Annunciation, the Nativity, the home at Nazareth, the mother at the cross, the mother in the Church (Acts i. 14); let us picture her addressing the servants.
- (b) For nearly thirty years she has lived with him and reflected (S. Luke ii. 19, 51). She has studied him as son, and as more than son, in everyday life, in homely routine; and now for the first time she speaks of him. The words say volumes of the experience of those years, of herself, and of him. And they are said directly after what we should almost regard as a check to her appeal.
- (c) We may take it as a mark of sound devotion to our Lady when she impresses this lesson on our minds. Some of us have been supposed to have been accompanying with him for some years now, and even to have made some study of her; have we learnt the truth of her words, and the wisdom of them?

II.—*The words.*

- (a) "Whatsoever." Nothing could be more definite, more unqualified. To go abroad, to resign work, to undertake a task, to give up a recreation, to enter the religious life, to speak out what is in the mind. But a strange word to the servants, although based on her experience; for they had no assurance of his resourcefulness in a difficulty.
- (b) "He saith unto you." We should not be like the servants, but nearer to Mary's state, for we ought to have had much experience leading to an assured conviction of his authority, and a firm belief in his wisdom. We must learn, as Mary, to trust his will, and there is no surer way than by prompt obedience.
- (c) "Do it." She does not say why. It is as though she, who is the fount of kindness, would say to us, "It is sure to be the very best." We know the sequel. And the appeal to obedience and confidence is in the sphere of common social life, in a matter in which many would regard the suggestion of his name as scarcely seemly. But her life confirms her words: absolute and simple obedience, with what reward!

III.—*What did the words imply?*

- (a) A striking revelation of the practical character of his life in those hidden years is made by her turning to him in such a manner as this. Cannot hazard a guess at what she supposed he would do. More probably there was the plain conviction based on experience that he always solved difficulties straightforwardly.
- (b) No reason to suppose that she was inviting a miracle. There was something which the servants were to do; he would decide what. So it is; he generally works through natural means with which we must co-operate. It is idle for us to expect miracles, while we stand by; we must take the water-pots and fill them.
- (c) S. John calls this the beginning of his miracles. It is just barely conceivable that he means the beginning of the miracles of his public life; but the hidden life of those years is not agreeable to the suggestion. Nor is it probable that he had spoken to her of a power not yet exerted. The words of Mary stand in their commanding boldness.

Who is my Mother?

FEAST OF THE B.V.M.

"Who is my mother?"—S. Matt. xii. 48.

Picture: the scene in S. Matt. xii. 46-50.

Resolve: to learn from her the spirit of self-surrender.

I.—*Mother and Son.*

- (a) The scene gives a glimpse of what we know, but pay little heed to: the mother's anxiety over him who was son to her, the one whom she had borne, flesh of her flesh. What anxiety on his behalf, when people were saying of him that he had an unclean spirit (S. Mark iii. 30, 31), and when he was always surrounded by crowds (S. Luke viii. 19)!
- (b) And as is the mother's heart towards him, so is the heart of the true and human son to his mother. Have I considered what love Jesus Christ has to men that he could leave his mother's society, deny himself to her, that he might go forth to seek and to save that which was lost?
- (c) There are those who think that his few recorded words are rebukes, as though he would break away from the bonds which united them together. But consider that his conception and nativity preclude such a thought. See rather his estimate of her co-operation with the will of God, ready to surrender him to the service of God, while yet the maternal heart ever went out to him.

II.—*His mother's desire to see him.*

- (a) His mother came with his brethren. It was the call of home in competition with the call of his mission. But the call was not made selfishly, to withdraw him from his duty, but on his behalf, lest he should be overwhelmed by his devotion to his work. What rightly-minded son doubts whether he complied with her desires so soon as the crowd dispersed?
- (b) But to the crowd his word is the insistence upon the supremacy of his mission. "He that hateth not . . . his mother . . . is not worthy of me," is said with full significance by him who left the holy home of Nazareth to be rejected and despised of men. How many a good mother and good son have put their love to each other before the claim of God!
- (c) He was preparing for a new family, who came not to send peace upon earth but a sword. "Henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three." There is to be a supernatural relationship in the new kingdom: yet he who thus taught was one who never grieved his mother by one slight. And she is to be found later in the new family (Acts i. 13, 14).

III.—"Who is my mother?"

- (a) The true significance of the words can only be realized by those who enter into the relation of that son to that mother. The words contain the highest testimony to her, and the highest blessing to those who do the will of his Father. If one would enter into the humanity of Jesus Christ one must not despise his mother, or ascribe to him that which is not even natural to a son.
- (b) But read herein his knowledge of her heart. In that crowd she was the one of whom he could say that she did the will of my Father which was in heaven. She had borne him in the grace of God; she had received him as a loan from the Lord (1 Sam. i. 28), she had given him up "as long as he liveth." It was still her word, "Be it unto me according to thy word."
- (c) And read herein his astounding assertion of the closeness to him of all those who do the will of God. They shall be to him as mother, brother, and sister; as blood relations, as members of one family and one home. Consider how the beloved disciple and the family at Bethany entered into this truth, which is for us also.

Yea, Rather

FEAST OF THE B.V.M.

"Yea, rather."—S. Luke xi. 28.

Picture: the mother and child.

Resolve: to imitate the obedience of the mother to the will of God.

I.—*The woman in the crowd.*

- (a) It was what we should call a very natural thing for a mother to say. She felt that it would be a proud thing to be the mother of such a preacher. One may contrast her words with the angelic salutation, for this woman had no understanding of what she was saying, and that she was ushering in the cry of Christendom, "All generations shall call me blessed."
- (b) Judged by the standard by which Christians can alone estimate the blessedness of the holy Mother, we must regard these words as emotional, and the expression of an idle sentiment. Yet the words are true. Beware of making an emotional sentiment out of truth, even in loving the mother of our Lord.
- (c) There is a danger in the spiritual life of such emptiness of sentiment, approving what is good without following it, commending others without imitating them. In reaction from our neglect of the blessed Mother, see to it that we imitate her, and that our devotion to her as the mother of our Lord draws us to deeper devotion to him.

II.—"Yea."

- (a) He accepts. She spoke more truly than she realized; in this she was like Caiaphas (S. John xi. 49-52). And Jesus testified first to the simple truth of the fact, and then to the deeper truth of Mary's life of grace. Nor do his words convey any more rebuke than the deeper acceptance and interpretation of what was lightly spoken, but rightly meant, albeit superficially.
- (b) Blessed indeed was the womb that bare him, and which for nine months in sacred reverence and great anxiety had been the tabernacle of God. Blessed truly were the paps which he had sucked, drawing human nourishment from the hallowed life which he had chosen for the constitution of his manhood.
- (c) The woman thought only of the blessedness of the mother in her adult son; but the words express the truth of the blessedness of her vocation. It is said of John Baptist, the forerunner, that he should be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. Such angelic words must help us to interpret the angelic message to Mary. Blessed to be mother of the Lord, more blessed to have heard the word of God and have kept it.

III.—"Rather."

- (a) It is this which points to the greater blessedness, which interprets the choice of the divine vocation. Consider that whereas every son of Adam draws life from two human sources, and both of them sharing in the fall of man, he draws his whole human life from his mother. In his manhood is the plenitude of human character which in the sons of Adam is divided into the ideal of man and the ideal of woman. And that which he took from her, and the nourishment that he drew from her, were not deemed unfitted to his human life.
- (b) How blessed must they be who can share with Mary the blessedness of hearing the word of God and of keeping it, as she heard and kept it in her heart! What reward to be blessed with Mary! The woman in the crowd thought only of the mother as accidentally related to her son's greatness; he calls attention to a closer relationship. Among those born of man she was nearest to him in keeping the word of God. And the blessedness of those who follow her in this is to share in her greater blessedness of conformity to him.
- (c) Mary is one with Jesus in will; but she cannot do what he does. It is not from her that he becomes the Saviour of mankind, but because he is this he chose and sanctified her as the medium of his manhood. Hence the greater blessedness is that which his words assert, not that which the woman had said.

Behold thy Mother!

FEAST OF THE B.V.M.

"Woman, behold thy son! . . . Behold thy mother!"—S. John xix. 26-27.

Picture: Mary standing at the cross of Jesus.

Resolve: to reverence the relation of mother and son.

I.—*See her there.*

- (a) It is false to the truth of the Incarnation to deny a mother's feelings to Mary. We may reverently remind ourselves of much that might sustain her, and the more so as we ascribe to her a deeper penetration into the mystery of his life and his work than to any other. But she who stands at the cross is mother.
- (b) Into the secrecy of her sanctification we cannot enter, and there is the danger of imitating the woman in the crowd (S. Luke xi. 27) if we go beyond what is revealed in an impetuous desire to honour her, or in an ignorant enthusiasm to guard the mystery of the Incarnation. But, whatever be the truth, hidden from us, of her sanctification, she stood at the cross of her Saviour.
- (c) But also she stood there in that deeper fellowship with him which had made her the example to mankind of one who heard the word of God and kept it. The Redeemer of mankind hung upon the cross: redeemed mankind, represented by the blessed Mother, stood by the cross.

II.—*"Behold thy mother!"*

- (a) Even on his cross forget not that one who in his humanity is son is gazing upon his own mother, upon her from whom he took that in which he was to die for the sins of the world. It is a false reverence to deny to him that which in the mystery of flesh binds son to mother, or to attribute to him a universal love of mankind in the abstract while denying to him the love of the one individual who throughout his human life had no rival claimant.
- (b) It is his third word. Appreciate his entire confidence in his mother. Not indifference, nor pre-occupation, nor that his duty to her was of minor importance; but that he knew her, and that she trusted him. But now the mother must no longer stay: he must take his farewell, and she must be tenderly spared the hours of darkness.
- (c) The gift is made to the beloved disciple. Bishop Westcott considers that "His mother's sister" (S. John xix. 25) is Salome. Mary was therefore commended to one who in his charge of her does not break the claim of natural or family tie, and who was also able most deeply to associate himself with her fuller revelation. It is he who first on the day of resurrection "saw and believed," although he knew not that he must rise again. It is he, who shares with Mary, the mystery of the silence which overshadows her future history (S. John xxi. 22, 23).

III.—*Behold thy mother! Behold thy son!*

- (a) The cross draws us to Mary. Whenever we stand there we stand together with Mary who stood by the cross of Jesus. We cannot see him hanging there for us without regarding her from whom he took that flesh in which he died.
- (b) The cross redeems mankind, and makes possible that fellowship of life which is prefigured in the holy family, the sacredness of motherhood, the sanctity of home, the consecration of virginity. The first picture of the Church is of the disciples with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brethren (Acts i. 14).
- (c) The cross binds together two generations by mother and son. In the continuous life of the Church two generations, with mutual obligations, are thus always knit together in the mystery of the divine family. Reverence of age, and reverence of youth; reverence of motherhood, reverence of mother's offspring. Devotion to the mother of our Lord should find expression in the reverence of human life.

Mary in the Upper Chamber

FEAST OF THE B.V.M.

"They went up into the upper chamber."—Acts i. 13, 14, R.V.

Picture: Apoc. xii. 1.

Resolve: to think more of the blessed Mother in heaven.

I.—*The upper chamber.*

- (a) A wonderful upper room, well known, and often resorted to. S. Mark calls it a large room (xiv. 15). Here the whole Church used to gather after the Ascension. Picture it in this meditation as representing heaven, that large upper place which he has gone to prepare for us.
- (b) The associations of the chamber fit the meditation. Here he met his disciples and with his own hands gave them his Body and Blood; here he manifested himself to them alive from the dead, and showed them his hands and his side. Here he gave them his peace, and they were filled with joy, typical of that joy of heaven, where severed friendships are knitted up, and we see those dear tokens of his passion.
- (c) It was his presence that gave the sacredness to this chamber, and which bound them together in one. Here instinctively the ten collected on the day of resurrection, Thomas found his true fellowship, and the eleven with the women, and the mother of Jesus and his brethren and the whole Church met and were at home.

II.—*The company of the upper chamber.*

- (a) The eleven. The apostolic body is essential to the Church, for her sacraments and the deposit of the faith. The women who used to minister to him, whom he had healed (S. Luke viii. 1-3), and the brethren of Jesus, those nearest to him. This is the company of the saints.
- (b) But now the Mother of Jesus is separately mentioned from the others; contrast S. John xix. 25. It is as though after the Ascension her supreme importance is recognized as guarding the truth that he who had risen and gone up to heaven has verily and indeed human flesh. S. Paul has insisted upon this truth of his manhood: he is born of a woman, he is of the seed of David according to the flesh. He took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of man. Mary in the apostolic Church guaranteed this verity.
- (c) With the eleven, and Mary and those who were most intimate with Jesus Christ, are gathered together the whole Church—the number of names together were about a hundred and twenty. One cannot think of the company of heaven without Mary; and the one scene, full of association, which brings together the whole Church, separates her from the other women for special mention.

III.—*Mary in heaven.*

- (a) It is S. John, to whom Mary was delivered, who has in rich symbolism most fully described her place. She is clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and has upon her head a crown of twelve stars. Symbolism has its significance. And there is no manner of doubt who she is, for she brought forth the man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron (Apoc. xii. 5; ep. ii. 27).
- (b) But now in the graphic language of the Apocalypse she becomes the mother of the Church; and when the child was caught up to God and his throne, she is persecuted in the person of the Church, but preserved. Nevertheless, the dragon makes war on the remnant of her seed.
- (c) One more association with the upper chamber adds great tenderness to the picture. "The women and Mary the mother of Jesus." And these women had stood with Mary at the cross, and among them was Mary Magdalene whom she had supported there. It is the cross that binds them together. This is Mary as we know her; Mary in heaven surrounded by the saints, interceding with the power of the one who has stood by the cross of Jesus and entered most deeply into its revelation.

○ Virgo Virginum

FEAST OF THE B.V.M.

"O Virgin of virgins, how shall this be? For neither before thee was any like thee, nor shall be after. Daughters of Jerusalem, why marvel ye at me? The thing which ye behold is a divine mystery."

Picture: the Nativity.

Resolve: devotion to the blessed Mother, because of her vocation.

I.—*O Virgin of virgins.*

- (a) There are virgins who have devoted themselves to virginity for the glory and service of God, and there are virgins who have possessed their honour in chasteness of spirit until they have been called to the honourable estate of matrimony. But here is a virgin who is to have the honour of virginity with the honour of motherhood.
- (b) Early Christian interpretation applied the words of Isaiah (vii. 14) to the Virgin of virgins (S. Matt. i. 23), not thereby probably misunderstanding the prophetic sign to Ahaz, but seeing in it a mystic reference to the Virgin mother, whose child indeed was Immanuel.
- (c) To day men stumble at the virgin-birth because it seems to obscure the true humanity of Jesus Christ. The world is convinced that he is consubstantial with us, but is indifferent whether he is consubstantial with the Father. The Catholic faith teaches that the virgin-birth truly respects his consubstantiality with us, while also regarding his consubstantiality with the Father.

II.—*O daughters of Jerusalem.*

- (a) In the antiphon the daughters of Jerusalem express their realization that she is the blessed among women, whom henceforth all generations shall call blessed. And Mary replies to the sisters of her nation in the same spirit which had enabled her to say, "Be it unto me according to thy word."
- (b) The words recall to one's mind those other words, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me but for yourselves and for your children" (S. Luke xxiii. 28). In his Passion they lamented for him with human sympathy, not realizing in it the awful revelation of their nation's decay, and the necessary sequel. In the antiphon the mother addresses them, and like her Son withdraws their consideration from personal attention, and bids them reflect upon the wonderful work of God. Would that we might always follow her example!
- (c) The picture suggested by the daughters of Jerusalem marvelling at the Virgin of virgins presents the consideration that the virgin-birth of the ineffable Son has changed the position of women. The childbirth has brought freedom to them in place of subjection, honour to maternity, respect to womanhood and to consecrated virginity.

III.—*It is a divine mystery.*

- (a) The false attempt to remove mystery from the Nativity is only one aspect of a larger issue. To withdraw the mind from the exclusive consideration of the miraculous, and to recognize that Almighty God is yet more to be honoured in his normal providence than in the exceptional and cataclysmic, ought to be an act of deep reverence in an age to which he has revealed such marvels of his wisdom in creation. But to refuse to think miracle possible is often a disregard of the nature of revelation.
- (b) The Christian does not ask whether the miracle of the virgin-birth is necessary, but "What befits God?" and "What has God done?" He asks whether, if God became man, his conception and birth are natural to him if they are not other than the conception and birth of one who is not consubstantial with the Father.
- (c) The mystery of God is the key to its interpretation. We cannot interpret God by the measure of our own mind; the mystery is the revelation. Receive it, reverence it, that one may embrace it.

The Low Estate Regarded

FEAST OF THE B.V.M.

"He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden."—S. Luke i: 48.

Picture: S. Mary singing Magnificat in the courts of heaven.

Resolve: not to regard the person of men.

I.—*The Prayer-book and the Blessed Mother.*

- (a) The Church has shown every reverence of attention to the unique position of blessed Mary. The feasts of her conception and nativity are observed, although neither is referred to in Holy Scripture. The Annunciation, the Visitation, and the Purification have their festivals. It is quite false to think that our Prayer-book has slighted the Mother of God.
- (b) But the old English feast of the Repose, of the Falling Asleep, or the Assumption, has been omitted, because of the traditions of a bodily assumption which have no warrant in Holy Scripture, but which have arisen from the analogy of Elijah, whose ascension is more truly regarded as a type of the ascension of the divine prophet. A loyal spirit will not speak with unguarded disfavour of this omission; it is a lesson, painful yet salutary, of the consequences of exaggeration and unrestraint in devotion.
- (c) So, too, note that the Prayer-book, which directs and restrains our public worship, but does not curb our private devotions, speaks of the holy Mother as the Virgin, Our Lady, S. Mary the Virgin, and the Blessed Virgin Mary. And while no feast is found in our Prayer-book of S. Joseph, who is closely connected with her in the history of the Nativity, there is a festival of S. Anne, her mother, who is not named in the Bible.

II.—*The Magnificat.*

- (a) Modern criticism has dealt learnedly and critically with the hymns of S. Luke. This will not deter us from singing in union with Mary in our daily offices. The Magnificat is the great hymn of the Incarnation, sung triumphantly by the Church day after day. It is the centre of our Evensong. Rise to its height and sing it in union with the blessed Mother, rejoicing in God our Saviour.
- (b) Meditate on its words, and on its history: make the singing of it a great act of faith, in which you join with the whole Church, praising God, in union with blessed Mary and those who gather round her, for the Incarnation and the Redemption.
- (c) And as you sing, "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed," consider Mary as the treasure of the whole Church, the Israel of God (Gal. vi. 16), whom he hath helped, whether in East or West, whether in communion with Rome or with Canterbury.

III.—*"He hath exalted the humble and meek."*

- (a) Blessed Mary, a village maiden, suitably betrothed to a carpenter, fitly surrounded at the Nativity of her child by the shepherds, not inappropriately housed in the stable of the inn. We ought as truly to regard her as chosen of God to confound the exalted and the wise, as we regard her chosen to exalt maternity, home life, and maidenhood. The Church has often failed to follow in her steps, in spite of the wonderful way in which in every age God has chosen the lowly-born for his special agents.
- (b) And picture her suitably surrounded by the villagers, the fishermen and the Galilean women (Act i. 13, 14). But the social equality of the humble company is as nothing to their spiritual equality and exaltedness in God's sight.
- (c) He who sings Magnificat should strive to be like Mary. The song not merely voices the experience of the apostolic age (1 Cor. i. 26-27) but of all ages. And where Mary is most loved, there most does one see the spiritual equality and fellowship bringing to nought the differences of this world.

A Sign

FEAST OF THE B.V.M.

"Ask thee a sign."—Isa. vii. 11.

Picture: Isaiah before Ahaz: the angel before Mary.

Resolve: to emulate Mary's faith.

I.—Ahaz.

- (a) Ahaz lived in troublous times, and succumbed to them (2 Kings xvi.). Even the majestic Isaiah could not make him into a great man, for he had not that fear of God which could have roused him into courage, as under the stimulus of Isaiah Hezekiah was stirred.
- (b) The prophet tried to rouse him by a sign. Ask it either in the depth or in the height above. But Ahaz could not be moved by the remembrance of the sun which stood still in the days of Joshua or by the signs to Gideon. Contemptuously or sceptically he refused; and Isaiah declared that the king voiced the public opinion of his age, which was wearying God by its superficiality; while to itself the age seemed to be so modern and wise.
- (c) We remember another generation which asked for a sign and was refused, because the sign stood before them and they could not read it, for they were spiritually blind. Yet to Ahaz and his court a sign was given; but he wanted no sign of "God with us," who would rather seek help from the gods of the nations whom he feared, than listen to the promise (Isa. vii. 4-9).

II.—The Annunciation.

- (a) To a village maiden came the word of God that she was to bear a son who was to have the throne of his father David. She asked for no sign. Her one word was that she was a virgin. Yet she was espoused, and might readily have thought that the word was to have fulfilment through her marriage. That she did not so think, is a clear revelation of her spiritual perception.
- (b) Nor did any earthly thoughts of a child who was to become the king of Israel occupy her mind. The promise that "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever" might seem to foretell a new Solomon, the throne of whose kingdom should be established for ever (2 Sam. vii. 13). But no word passed her lips of material interpretation. The chosen vessel had been cleansed within, and a mind filled with spiritual thoughts understood the character of the revelation.
- (c) "And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." The promise was too great for exultation; submission could alone receive it. And the angel departed; but he left his sign. Elizabeth was the sign.

III.—The Nativity.

- (a) Mary was not like Ahaz: it is the part of faith to accept a sign. She visited Elizabeth, and there a further sign was given through her aged cousin. Faithful in small things as in great, in trial as in the greater strain of exalted revelation, she endured the reproach and anxiety of her conception, and followed her espoused husband to Bethlehem.
- (b) And now the sign is offered to the humble shepherds. They were told that a Saviour, Christ the Lord, was born. And as a sign of the truth of the promise they would find, if they went to Bethlehem, a baby lying in a manger (S. Luke ii. 12). Humble and obedient they followed up the sign, and had faith's reward. They knew that the baby was even the same as this Saviour (S. Luke ii. 17).
- (c) And another sign was offered to the wise men: a star aroused their attention, and guided them till it came and stood over where the young child was. And as the shepherds and the wise men met Mary with her child, so in all ages those who have faith to believe God's word, receive the sign which confirms their faith and brings them with faithful Mary to the cradle of the Holy Child, the Son of the Highest, the Saviour and the King.

Abode with Him

FEAST OF S. ANDREW

"Abode with him that day."—S. John i. 39.

Picture : S. Andrew looking upon the Lamb of God.

Resolve : to have the spirit of a true missionary.

I.—*S. Andrew illustrates in his early history three stages of spiritual experience.*

- (a) As a disciple of S. John Baptist he began with a baptism of repentance. The first stage of experience is purgative; the power of God is learned in its action upon the individual life, as a power of grace, and as a training in the efficacy of prayer.
- (b) As taught by S. John Baptist he learned to gaze with attractive devotion upon the Lamb of God. This was the later stage of the Baptist's work. It marks the illuminative way. In this stage he has passed through the experience of the forgiveness of sins, that first-fruit of grace, and, sanctified by it, as he reaps the fruits of forgiveness, he is passing on to see in Jesus Christ his example.
- (c) As abiding with Jesus. He has surrendered himself. It is the unitive way. The claim of Jesus Christ is predominant; the individual will is mortified, and S. Andrew is henceforth the willing servant of his Lord. He is at his service entirely, without desire of consideration. He has left all to follow him.

II.—*S. Andrew's preparation as a missionary.*

- (a) First findeth his own brother. The missionary is not one who goes abroad; that question rests with the good pleasure of God. He who belongs to God cannot choose. But the missionary is one who has the impulse to bring others to God. S. Andrew began his missionary life on this day whereon he not only saw the Lamb of God, but went from that sight to find his own brother.
- (b) He was called to be a fisher of men (S. Mark i. 17). He had the desire to be a missionary; but Jesus Christ called and commissioned him. Every true-hearted Christian must be a missionary in will and according to opportunity; it is of God to give the opportunity to one in one way, to another in another way. No Christian dare say that he is not interested in the extension of the kingdom of Christ.
- (c) He was called to be with him, that he might send him forth to preach (S. Mark iii. 14). This was involved in the call to be a fisher of men. He only can be a fisher of men, who lives with him. "Apart from me ye can do nothing."

III.—*S. Andrew teaches us some principles of missionary life.*

- (a) Priority was not his, although he was called first. He brought S. Peter, yet S. Peter was chief. And James and John were next to S. Peter. S. Andrew was quite satisfied with Jesus Christ; hence there was no room for ambition, or self-seeking, or desiring a successful career.
- (b) He brought his perplexities to Jesus Christ (S. John vi. 8, 9). He who abides with Jesus Christ never nurses a problem in his own heart. That is a great difference between the three ways. In the purgative way one is still distracted by the reform of one's life; in the illuminative way one lives for God and works for him; in the unitive way God lives in him, and he lives in God with his whole life.
- (c) He brought his spiritual desires to Jesus Christ (S. John xii. 21, 22). This too is in the unitive way. And all these principles of missionary life are developments from abiding with Jesus that day. That day proved to be the beginning of a lifelong abiding with him. He tasted and saw that the Lord is gracious.

The brought him to Jesus

FEAST OF S. ANDREW

"And he brought him to Jesus."—S. John i. 42.

Picture: S. Andrew finding his own brother.

Pray: for the growth of a powerful Christian influence.

I.—*S. Andrew.*

- (a) S. Andrew was not at all a striking man. S. Paul may make us feel the hopelessness of being useful; but S. Andrew, so obviously overshadowed by his brother, so gentle and retiring, so little heard of; with just the attractive gift of making people approach him, and never seeming to be alone (S. John vi. 8, 9; xii. 22). S. Andrew, who seems to be local in character (S. John i. 44; xii. 22), one of whom no one could be afraid. I wonder if we should have despised him as not clever, or having no force of character.
- (b) But it was not because he may have been without great power of leadership that he could bring others to Jesus, but because he had behind him the history of his preparation under John the Baptist, with its spiritual foundation of repentance and desire for the kingdom of God. A superficial Christian does not bring others to Jesus.
- (c) What encouragement! He brought a much greater person than himself to Jesus. And yet at that time Peter did not look—to others than Jesus—as though he would be a great man in the new community. Mercifully we are not allowed to see more than a very little of the good which is done, lest we should be thrown off our balance.

II.—*"He brought him to Jesus."*

- (a) Reflect that Andrew had already himself found Jesus, and followed him. It is the secret of Christian influence. Not talking about him, not shouting his name familiarly from the housetop, but having followed Jesus, known him as Master, and abided with him.
- (b) And Andrew had seen in him the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. It was the Jewish spiritual life in which he had been nurtured, and which had brought forth in him its true fruit, that brought Andrew into direct personal knowledge with Jesus. He who brings others to Jesus is he who has such a history as Andrew of preparation and of sin taken away.
- (c) Do we not need a revival of this spirit in our times? We bring people to church, and hope it will do them good. We beg people to attend services, as though Christianity were a cultus. We are even keen on fasts and festivals, on genuflections, and vestments; but do we show them Jesus, the Lamb of God, whom we have followed?

III.—*Foreign missions.*

- (a) What is required in us at home to be able to bring others to Jesus is also required to bring heathen to him. A missionary must be able to bring others to Jesus, not to point out the correct way merely. He must be to him a personal acquaintance, friend and Lord and Saviour. One to be constantly spoken to in prayer, meditation, and colloquy; a tried and proved friend in the experiences of sin, comfort, and strength.
- (b) We expect this type of missionary. It may be worth thinking of in days when we are busy over the missionary's education and equipment, his study of psychology and anthropology and the like. If we want this in our missionaries we must pray for it: pray for the spiritual maintenance of their lives, pray for conversions, pray for new Andrews who will bring others to the Lamb of God.
- (c) We are in danger either of criticizing or idolizing missionaries. They are Christians very much like us, only with greater difficulties. In England we bring men to church; abroad the heathen may be brought to the Church of England, or to Western habits, instead of being brought to Jesus, who is to be their Lamb of God, and not an Englishman's God. And it is the Mother Church which is to send forth these right missionaries.

Difficulty and Faith

FEAST OF S. THOMAS

"My Lord and my God."—S. John xx. 28.

Picture: the scene in the upper room on the octave of Easter.

Resolve: great forbearance towards those who love yet doubt.

I.—*The character of S. Thomas.*

- (a) From the few references—all of them Johannine—we recognize the man. The several passages hold together with undubitable unity. Loyal to a degree, with a loyalty to truth which sanctifies the loyalty. But a pessimistic character. He can be loyal to death; "Let us also go with him that we may die with him." It is not the cheery loyalty which is certain that it is on the winning side, but the loyalty which will lose with him rather than be separated from him.
- (b) Such a character deeply attracts us. It is easy to be moved by enthusiasm: we are not always generous to this deeper loyalty, which sees not victory and success but truth, whether it win or lose. Appreciate this deep loyalty to Christ in many who are not helped by their emotions, and who seem to see the decay of religion.
- (c) Appreciate too the same quality in many who have not found it easy to believe, and who cannot close their minds to many difficulties in the Christian revelation, and who yet are true to the faith, scorning a cheap popularity through pandering to bigotry and to popular cries.

II.—*S. Thomas in the octave of Easter.*

- (a) Consider his week of solitary distress. It is easy to condemn him; it is truer to respect him. No one suffered more than he; no one could have more fully confessed his mistake: no one rejoiced more than himself in the victory of faith over doubt or reserved judgment. Yet all that week he wanted to believe.
- (b) He was true to himself that week. He was one who must win his way alone. He could not be carried along to belief by the persuasion of the others acting on his own desires. The very longing to believe hindered him, lest he should be over-persuaded because he wished to believe. And in his grief he could not find relief in the company of his brethren.
- (c) Yet the revelation was not made to him until he was in their company. There was no obstinacy in his unbelief. They were convinced, and he would be with them to see for himself; but he must be convinced, and not persuaded. His very doubt was the measure of his love and of his faith; but he could only move slowly. Lazarus had not helped him in the trial of Good Friday. But "My Lord and my God" reveals to us the sufferings of his suspense.

III.—*The Christmas revelation.*

- (a) At this season we cannot but contrast those who have seen the Lord Incarnate and those who have not seen and yet have believed. Was it more easy to believe when he was seen in the crib, than it is for us who visit him in this coming festival, and who have known him in his resurrection power exhibited in the history of the Church?
- (b) But appreciate the necessity of holding the faith. It is one thing to respect S. Thomas' doubt, or to explain it charitably by his constitution or physical health or natural character; quite another thing to exaggerate charity into placing doubt above belief, scepticism above loyal adherence to the faith. Thomas had to say "My Lord and my God" before he was restored, and like S. Paul he could have been disobedient to the revelation of that night (Acts xxvi. 19). Pray that all priests may be as honest as S. Thomas.
- (c) Learn the lesson of Christian charity, and do not substitute for it a sentimental exaltation of doubt. Our blessed Lord rebuked S. Thomas; but he had never lost sight of his disciple, and he did not condemn. Who but he could have administered the rebuke with such gentleness?

Heaven Open

FEAST OF S. STEPHEN

"And laid him in a manger."—S. Luke ii. 7.

Picture: the holy Infant on his manger-throne.

Pray: for the vision that transfigures life.

I.—"*Tabernacled among us*" (S. John i. 14, R.V. marg.).

(a) S. John recalls the Shekinah glory upon the ark, and transfigures the manger, interpreting to us in symbolic language that glory as of the Only-begotten from the Father. In dim vision the mystery of the glory upon the Mercy-seat had portrayed the tabernacling of God among his people; and beyond all words the cradle of Bethlehem gives us the true tabernacling of God with men.

(b) When the devout Israelite knelt in the Temple, with his eyes fixed upon the veil which was before the Holy of holies, and tried to solve the mystery of God's glory manifested on the Mercy-seat, the cry of his heart was "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." But what was insoluble to him is daily realized by Christians in their fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. Even in the manger the love of mother and Son, and the joy of the shepherds, tell us of the good tidings.

(c) There are times in a Christian's life when he feels cold and disheartened. He worships and yet he seems far off; he prays but his voice seems to return upon himself; he may even question whether he has any living faith. At this season gain fresh strength from the open vision. By the coming of Christ into the world life has been lifted up from isolated struggle into the vitality of divine companionship: Emmanuel: God with us. Use this fellowship.

II.—"*Hath spoken unto us in a Son*" (Heb. i. 2, R.V. marg.).

(a) The epistle to the Hebrews opens with a contrast. Revelation had been partial and intermittent; now it is complete, final and permanent; the separate and isolated utterances have given way to an ever-present revelation. The revelation mediated through Moses, prophet and poet has been gathered up and brought to its fulness in the direct, immediate revelation of him who is of one substance with the Father.

(b) The fellowship, impossible in the old dispensation, is made possible to us by the revelation of the Incarnation; the Son has made known the Father. "The Only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared." In the manger God has explained himself to us in human language.

(c) This revelation is for use. The Hebrew Christians had not gone on to know, and in arrested growth lay the danger of falling away. Take up the position of a beloved son through the mediating God-man, and look boldly into the heavens for the Father. Picture the infant growing to maturity, increasing in wisdom, and take the warning of the apostle not to remain a babe in Christ, but to press on to maturity (Heb. v. 11—vi. 1). Knowledge must increase the sense of fellowship; and fellowship will interpret the revelation in life.

III.—"*Emptied himself*" (Phil. ii. 7, R.V.).

(a) In the manger he hid his glory beneath the accessibility of human nature in its weakness. In the manger we see the humiliation of the Son for whom there was no room in the inn. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;" in fellowship and in unfolding revelation will be experienced the self-emptying of him who though he was rich yet for our sakes became poor.

(b) As life goes on we find that our highest joys are tinged with sorrow. It is said of him that he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. The birth of Christ heralded by angels and rejoiced in by shepherds and Eastern sages soon passed on to the Circumcision and the slaughter of the infants. Fellowship—but of suffering also: revelation—but also of the meaning of exaltation through suffering.

(c) We pass from Christmas Day to the festival of the first martyr; so closely does this thought lie to the other two. S. Stephen saw the Son of Man *standing* at the right hand of God in the attitude of ready help; and each one will interpret the vision according to his needs as he enters into the fellowship. He saw the heavens opened. There is the revelation: our hope and surety is the Son of man in heaven, thus revealing to us the whole will of God. There too is the self-emptying, for the vision was for martyrdom.

Fellowship and Joy

FEAST OF S. JOHN

"The life was manifested."—1 S. John i. 2.

Picture: the life of the Blessed Trinity as that of fellowship and joy.

Resolve: the cultivation of fellowship with God.

I.—*The life.*

- (a) S. John's thought is of life, in its broadest conception, life as God has purposed, that life which ever was in him, and which runs through all creation, and which, through the Incarnation, has developed into fuller life, and is to issue in the attainment of the life of unity with him, which is the consummation of the divine purpose through the ages.
- (b) For us Christians it is the life of grace, that life of fellowship with God through the Son, which is also fellowship with one another in him, and of which joy is the realized experience. With one leap the writer, who knew quite well the ups and downs of daily experience, the depression, the struggle, has soared above all the partial and has declared the true life in its perfection.
- (c) In this Christmas-tide let us make an effort to lift life up above the clouds of our poverty-stricken experience, and to gain a vision of its fulness. We expect so little that we are easily satisfied. We do not lift up our heads, but acquiesce in a life of incapacity and struggle, while we lazily place in an after-world the experience which is revealed as ours now, if we will enter into it.

II.—*"The life was manifested."*

- (a) Once in the history of the world this life of man, according to the purpose of God, has been revealed in Man. It is the unique manifestation: and S. John had seen it, not merely as an unattainable ideal, but had handled it (S. Luke xxiv. 39); for he who was manifested in flesh is the life which he brings to us.
- (b) This life was with the Father. Back to the very nature of the eternal Godhead he carries all the verities of this life of man. It was not a unique occurrence, an event in the world; it was the manifestation of that which was there from the first. Fellowship with the Father is life. His revelation is not just the setting of an example, but the bringing to us of that eternal life which is nothing else than the adoption of sons.
- (c) Here is a twofold truth for meditation, the study of that Life of lives in prayerful reflection and in imitation; and incorporation into that true life of ours through incorporation into him, his death and his life. "In Christ" that we may be "like Christ"; "like Christ" only by being "in Christ."

III.—*Experiences of life.*

- (a) Fellowship with us. S. John had seen; his readers had not seen. But they were to share alike. What he in the experience of his life enjoyed, we, too, are to participate in. The fellowship is not just social fellowship; it is Christian fellowship. The nearer to Christ, the nearer we are to one another. And, if we would get nearer to one another, it must be in him.
- (b) Fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. Herein is revealed much of the weakness of Christian life. We believe that we are in Christ for forgiveness; some know that they are in him for strength; but few know the experience of the fellowship with the Father, and thus enter upon their inheritance in the Son, who, as Jesus Christ, has brought the life of fellowship to us.
- (c) Joy fulfilled. S. John throughout this epistle assumes a Christian experience in his fellow-Christians. The gift of life and its fellowship was not meant to lie unrealized and unused. The fear of working upon one's emotions, and the danger of depending upon them, cannot be an excuse for not realizing the life. Grasp the gift, put it to the test, use the fellowship. S. John was not writing of a past memory; he was connecting it with a present experience, and the experience of life is joy.

Solomon and Herod

FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS

"Divide the living child in two." "Give her the living child."—1 Kings iii. 25-27.

Picture: Solomon and Herod.

Resolve: to reverence childhood for the sake of the Child of Bethlehem.

I.—*King Solomon and one born King of the Jews.*

- (a) Solomon left much to be desired as an ideal king of Israel, but he realized the dignity of his kingdom, and of his office. He built the temple also. King Herod also built a temple; but in what else are they alike! We picture the one saying, "Give her the living child and in no wise slay it"; and the other is associated in our minds with the slaughter of the Innocents.
- (b) King Solomon is rather the imperfect type of the King who said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." His wisdom was proverbial, his magnificence became a symbol of glory. The Gentile world in the person of the Queen of Sheba was representative of the visit of the Wise Men to his Archetype. "But I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." "But behold, a greater than Solomon is here."
- (c) The wisdom of Solomon was established by this dispute over the living child (1 Kings iii. 28). His judgment was consummate wisdom, because of its understanding of the human heart. He knew that the mother's bowels yearned upon her son. The greater than Solomon has entered personally into the experience of the human heart, and he trusts it. Are we worthy of this trust?

II.—*The living and the dead child.*

- (a) What a contrast! Herod and Mary! The one thinks naught of infant life; the other is nursing the Infant who is to regenerate child life and to sanctify it in the sight of man. How different the "Divide the living child in two" of Solomon (1 Kings iii. 25), and the sword that Herod sent into the borders of Bethlehem! And the Child of Bethlehem has brought this fate upon his infant companions, and no hand is moved to prevent it.
- (b) There are terrible scenes to-day of Herodian massacres of infants, even in Christendom; and he moves no finger to prevent them. Infant mortality—through ignorance, infant lives ruined by criminal neglect, infant lives perverted from the first, infant lives inheriting taint and disease; and there are deeds of wilful cruelty to infants. How long, O Lord! By thy silent endurance of the slaughter of the Innocents, strengthen our faith!
- (c) Self spoke in the woman's words. "Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it," as in the act of Herod. The heart as God made it said, "Give her the living child and in no wise slay it." And this Child came to abolish self and to redeem the human heart after God's purpose.

III.—*"Give her the living child."*

- (a) The gift of childhood in higher revelation is the fruit of the Incarnation. As to Mary was given the Child, so to the Church is given the care of childhood. The Church must guard childhood, materially, educationally, morally, and spiritually.
- (b) And the Christmas Child is the treasure of the Church. She will not think her Crib a puerility. She will not blush to worship the Babe, and for his sake to cherish all infants. She will value aright the movement of the human heart yearning over the helplessness of infant life, and the divine gift of maternal affection.
- (c) To some he gives special care of infants in his Church. Pre-eminently to mothers, who are the first of church-workers: then to domestic nurses—pray for nurses; to those in charge of Christian crèches, to nurses in children's hospitals, to homes for orphan infants, to religious women in charge of babies. Pray for all these.

Conversion

FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF S. PAUL

"I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."—Acts ix. 5.

Picture: the scene on the road to Damascus.

Pray: for the conversion of the heathen, of those who are in error, of those who are not turned to God.

I.—*Conversion.*

- (a) The essence of conversion. It brings two persons together. Contrition is not conversion, though by the grace of God it often leads to conversion. But by itself contrition is too exclusively occupied with one person, self. For conversion the other person, God, must be the predominant power, which takes hold of a man's life.
- (b) Conversion is not only required of those who with open eyes defy God. S. Paul had served God zealously all his life after the way of his fathers. There are many Christians serving God thus, who yet are in dire need of this personal revelation from God, this voice from heaven into their own souls. God has not taken the centre of their lives away from themselves to fix it on himself.
- (c) The work of conversion varies with the history of each individual. With S. Paul it fixed itself on the realization—and at the very time when he believed that he was doing God's work by breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples—that Jesus of Nazareth was himself God. With some it is experienced through conviction of sin; "What must I do to be saved?"; with others through the claim of the divine service; "What wilt thou have me to do?" With some conversion is never needed, *i.e.* where the supremacy of God has been the predominant feature of life from baptism.

II.—*The doctrine of conversion.*

- (a) It is the work of God. It is but one application of the doctrine of grace. "When it pleased God, who . . . called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me" (Gal. i. 15, 16).
- (b) It requires man's consent. His conscience was pricking him (Acts xxvi. 14), and he might have resisted; but "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts xxvi. 19). It is well to have his own word for this: the suddenness, the circumstances, of his conversion might suggest that he was an involuntary agent in a miracle of compulsion. But the work of grace had begun earlier, in the arguments of S. Stephen, his faithful witness, and the testimony of those against whom he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter. Now he was kicking against the pricks.
- (c) Its reality. The flippant use of the word conversion for what is merely an emotional excitement, and the fearful danger to religion of making capital out of sudden conversions, turn our minds to the reality of S. Paul's experience. It was grave enough to make him seek retirement first (Gal. i. 17): then a life service of suffering. He never boasts of his conversion, denies his past history, or exaggerates it.

III.—*The term "Conversion."*

- (a) Its abuse should not tempt Christians into ridicule. Life is too serious for anything but realities: What sacred term has not been abused? Consider, rather, how important it is that we should try to understand what others mean, who are zealous for God, and whether in their misapplication of this word they may not be doing God service more than those who deny the fact which it is meant to represent.
- (b) But avoid the errors sometimes associated with it. Conversion may need to be repeated. It was after some years of grace that it was said to S. Peter, "When thou art converted" (S. Luke xxii. 32). Many seem to need two conversions, first from sin and then from self.
- (c) It is the fact which is important, not the term. S. Paul never uses the term of his own conversion. Many a man either suddenly or slowly has yielded to the grace of God, and turned to him, or throughout his life has been turned to him, who has never felt the need to apply this special word to his experiences.

The Conversion of the Godly

FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF S. PAUL

"God, who separated me from my mother's womb."—Gal. i. 15.

Picture: the young man Saul, a godly Jew.

Pray: for the conversion of the Jews.

I.—*A devout home.*

- (a) Timothy and Paul are examples of converts from godly homes. Thank God for many godly homes, with their heritage of divine service. S. Paul had, too, a family tradition of noble service in the state, for which they had been awarded the Roman citizenship. And the Roman family in their Tarsian home were not ashamed of the God of Israel.
- (b) This inheritance of nobility of character manifested itself in a devotion to the claims of religion which went deeper than an attention to the minutiae of external rules. Paul was nourished on the spiritual teaching of the greater prophets, and on their messianic hope, and he was built up on the devotional life of the Psalms of David.
- (c) The ancient religion became to him life's preparation for that fulfilment of the law and the prophets which was the divine purpose of Judaism. He was like a second John Baptist in this. The forerunner through asceticism, the apostle of the Gentiles through unbounded zeal, exhibited their single devotion to the claims of God.

II.—*Fruits of piety.*

- (a) Educated in the law, he realized through it the righteousness of Jehovah, and the authority of his claims upon life. He accepted its demands, and found that he could not satisfy them (Rom. vii. 7-25). The strain upon him of a demand realized, but which he could not fulfil, an aspiration felt which he could not satisfy, led him through zeal and dissatisfaction of spirit to the more strenuous efforts of a persecutor.
- (b) But a conscience ready to respond, a guileless spirit, could receive the truth when it was flashed upon him. Misdirected lives have not this power to respond, or even to see the truth; whereas Paul had the grace given to him to be not disobedient to the heavenly calling.
- (c) All this although the call was most severe. Consider the pain of facing the anguish at home when he must tell them that he had joined the Nazarenes. Perhaps this sorrow was rendered more bearable by the righteous severity of his father, at whose hands he suffered the loss of all things.

III.—*True conversion.*

- (a) Many conversions are superficial; they are the conversions of superficial men. S. Paul, devoted through life to the God of his fathers, was wholly converted. It was a conversion to Jesus Christ, and not a mere change of religion; Jesus satisfied the deep need which a spiritual Judaism had taught him to feel. It is no wonder that he is pre-eminently the apostle of grace and faith.
- (b) His conversion was deep enough to be life-long in its reality; it never grew stale. Hence the great part which thanksgiving plays in his teaching. In all his thoughts was uppermost that realization of the divine mercy and goodness which had called him and had forgiven him.
- (c) Here is an Epiphany of the divine leading. The training in the Jewish family was part of his preparation for his after life as the apostle of the Gentiles. There must be many Israelites to-day, brought up in such godly atmosphere, nurtured upon the Psalms. Why do we not pray more earnestly that they may be such as S. Paul was?

The Life of the Converted

FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF S. PAUL

"Your life is hid with Christ in God."—Col. iii. 3.

Picture: S. Paul in converse with some disciples.

Resolve: to examine myself, how much my life is really Christian.

I.—*"Through him."*

- (a) Through him, in him, and unto him is the Pauline revelation of Christian life. It is a most serious misinterpretation of S. Paul to confine his teaching to the forgiveness of sins. With him this is only a beginning. Consider what the end must be! But S. Paul has realized that it is a verity, a truth to be lived on, a foundation to build on, and not a last stone in the completed building. He has grasped forgiveness sturdily.
- (b) And forgiveness is through Jesus Christ; Christ died for us; S. Paul will allow no place for man's contributory share; he must receive all from him, without offer of any worthiness. To God must be all the glory that he has vouchsafed this great gift for Christ's sake.
- (c) And this forgiveness is not a past gift, almost forgotten by now. It is fundamental at every moment of his life. He can never turn to the death of Jesus Christ without refreshing himself with the realization of its present enjoyment, and deepening his devotion to him who died for us.

II.—*"In him."*

- (a) This zealous devotion to Jesus Christ is not exhausted by the initial forgiveness of sins. The wealth of the gift is only realized by the fellowship of life incorporated in him, as he receives the continual inflowing of his grace, as he is made in Christ Jesus bold to approach God with open face, being covered with his righteousness, and found in him.
- (b) And the life of fellowship is the life of power. Christ is in him in all his strength, sanctifying him, invigorating him. In him he is rich, in him he is full, in him he is conqueror. S. Paul uses that fellowship in personal communion, and with it he overcomes opposition, loneliness, reverse, depression. To believe in the forgiveness of sins as a past fact may be to trust in Jesus Christ as a distant Saviour; but to have the forgiveness of sins as a present condition of fellowship is to live in Jesus Christ as an abiding source of life.
- (c) The preciousness of this life is realized in the fellowship of suffering, and in the fruitfulness of spiritual work. Constrained by the love of Christ, the apostle knows no life other than that which Christ-in-him is forming. What shame to us who boast a Pauline evangel, and know so little of his Christian spirit (see 2 Cor. iv. 7-10)!

III.—*"Unto him."*

- (a) And yet there is always the future, yet more rich and full. The magnificence of the present only enhances the prospect, and brings conviction of its certainty. The departed already sleep through Jesus; and S. Paul can long to depart and be with him, which is far better. The full use of present life in Jesus, by thus confirming the future, acts even now with tremendous power, stimulating and uplifting him.
- (b) And unto him as goal is so genuine a purpose that it carries with it the direction of every purpose unto him in his present experience. Christ lives in him only to make him live more unto Christ here and hereafter. He would subject every thought and imagination unto him.
- (c) It is this realization of through, in, and unto him, that makes S. Paul so strong a Churchman. The lives of Christians in Christ cannot be separate things: ye are all one in Christ. The Christ is the Christ-life in men. And the Church grows up into Christ in all things as his fulness, growing unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ (Eph. iv. 13).

Tabernacled among us

FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

"And tabernacled among us."—S. John i. 14, R.V. marg.

Picture: the infant Christ presented in Herod's temple. "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple" (Mal. iii. 1).

Pray: for clearer spiritual vision.

I.—*A tabernacle the meeting-place of God and man.*

- (a) Mark the historical development, its wax and wane. A tent of meeting in the wilderness (Exod. xxxiii. 7-11): a royal temple (Solomon's): a national temple shorn of its glory (after the Exile, Hag. ii. 3); a foreigner's gift (Herod's temple, S. John ii. 20). Crude ideas find expression in facts. As time goes on the facts fit the ideas less well; the underlying idea is lost in the necessity of circumstances. Hence
- (b) Ideas supply the place of fact, and grow beyond it. The Old Testament is the history of the growth of ideas bursting the bonds of literal crudity. This is prophecy. In the exile there was no temple, a fruitful source of the expansion of ideas. In Haggai the new temple preaches this expansion (ii. 7, 9). The Old Testament ends in an announcement which is the product of the expansion of ideas:—"The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple" (Mal. iii. 1).
- (c) For this idea is that the true temple is where God and man meet face to face. So it was in the days of Moses (Exod. xxxiii. 9-11). So in Solomon's temple: yet already it is felt that the temple cannot hold God: it is merely an arrangement (1 Kings viii. 27-30, and 2 Chron. v. 13-vi. 2). Finally, the discipline of the exile without a temple has made Israel feel after a more direct communication with God, and look for a divine advent which shall be a real tabernacling among men (Zech. ii. 10, 11).

II.—*The Incarnation is the true tabernacling of God with men.*

- (a) So the incarnate Son began to teach. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (S. John ii. 19), and in time S. John saw that his human body was the temple (S. John ii. 21), and thus wrote:—"The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us."
- (b) The Transfiguration of our Lord is the illumination of the feast of tabernacles: S. Peter wished to build three tents in order to perpetuate what was passing away (S. Matt. xvii. 4). But the true tabernacle of meeting is the elevation of human nature into personal fellowship with God in the Incarnation; and a glimpse was granted into the Ascension glory of his humanity.
- (c) A third time the truth was impressed by the rending of the veil of the temple at his crucifixion. The veil which marked the limits of communication between God and man, hiding him in the darkness of the inner sanctuary, was rent, as the way of approach to the Father was made perfect in the fulfilment of the divine will (Heb. ix. 7 ff., x. 19, 20).

III.—*The end is not yet: the Incarnation, because the fulfilment, is also the expansion of ideas.*

- (a) As treated by S. Paul. The Church, because the body of Christ, is also his temple, the true meeting of God and man (Eph. ii. 19-22, 1 Cor. iii. 16): and the individual has his full gift likewise (1 Cor. vi. 19, 2 Cor. vi. 16).
- (b) The epistle to the Hebrews expands the earlier lines of thought. The temple is both the mystical body of the High priest, and the place in which he stands for us in the presence of God (Heb. ix. 11-24). Our thoughts are lifted from the divine society of the Church on earth to its realization in his ascended person.
- (c) S. John in apocalyptic vision consummates the ideal. Reality at length without a visible manifestation. The tabernacle of God is with men: and there is no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple (Apoc. xxi. 3, 22). The error of the Jewish Church was the literalism of materialism: the Christian may fall into the same error.

Jesus Christ the Touchstone

FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

"This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel."—S. Luke ii. 34.

Picture: the infant Jesus in the arms of Simeon.

Pray: that you may submit your will to Jesus Christ.

I.—*Men judge themselves by Jesus Christ.*

- (a) Certain things in life show what a man really is; they bring out the true self, which before lay hidden. Crises are among such things; the mother in the death of her only child; the father in facing ruin or a family disgrace. And friendships are often a great revelation of character, as is one's attitude towards high ideals.
- (b) Jesus Christ did this for the men of his generation. He did not attract all. Many criticized his character, saw a deceiver in him, or a fanatic. Other and simpler people thought of him as kind and gracious; others were impressed by his miracles but not drawn by his teaching. But some were drawn out of self altogether, and found their true life in him; and they were not all of one type. Consider Matthew, Peter, Mary Magdalene.
- (c) He does so still, and that is why he is a stumbling-stone and rock of offence. In England most of us understand about Jesus Christ; but pride, or self, or superficiality prevent us from submitting to him. Many kindly disposed people remain indifferent to him, and others see very little in him. But it is marvellous what he does with those who surrender themselves to him.

II.—*The difference is not in Jesus Christ.*

- (a) He is universal. He tests the image of God in us. His purpose is to complete the will of God in the creation of each man. He is the fulfiller of the gospel of man's creation, as he is the perfect presentation of God's idea of man. It makes a great demand on us to respond to this presentation of our life. Do not deny the power to respond, or that it is of grace. Choice is the response to grace.
- (b) The difference is in ourselves. Gradually, generally unconsciously, men are fixing the purpose of their lives, and they are doing this by the hidden use or neglect of grace and of opportunity, by listening to or by stifling conscience. It is because man is eternal that every decision and choice of his life is eternal in character.
- (c) Hence the great responsibility of life. Our lives are given us to make us learn the beauty of Jesus Christ, and to see God revealed in him. Are they rising or falling? It is not merely a question that men judge themselves by their attitude towards him, but that they are also rising and falling in each response to his voice or failure to answer.

III.—*Learn the power of Jesus Christ over man.*

- (a) Some people touch us superficially. Either they do not come much into our lives, or are themselves superficial; others influence us deeply for good or for ill. They help us to unfold our lives, to understand ourselves; they may change the current of our life. Influence is a divine mystery, a spiritual current. Its perverted use is a terrible stain upon character.
- (b) But no one can reach the heart like Jesus Christ. He speaks to its hidden depths, interprets the unconscious image of God interwoven in our creation. He not merely touches, he inspires, he draws forth, he strengthens, if we respond. Study, therefore, Jesus Christ, and to understand his mind; and pray for sincerity.
- (c) This power of influence is a foretaste of the day of judgment. All things are naked and open to him who is the judge of mankind, because he is God in manhood. In him we shall see ourselves revealed as we were made to become. In him we shall welcome the personal power which has made our life and its freedom, or read the sentence upon life's failure to use opportunity.

Opportunity

FEAST OF S. MATTHIAS

"That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell."—Acts i. 25.

Picture: the twelve thrones of the apostles.

Resolve: to rely more habitually upon the grace of God.

I.—Consider the election of S. Matthias.

- (a) The apostles felt the necessity of supplying the place of Judas: "Wherefore . . . must one be ordained to bear witness with us of his resurrection." This necessity is not obvious to us: only a certain fitness is manifest. There are many things in the Catholic Church which the Christian so regards and accepts.
- (b) Had the apostles waited longer one was already being prepared, set apart from his mother's womb, who was to be the youngest member of the apostolic body, born out of due time. He was to be a unique witness of the Resurrection. As it was he became a thirteenth: Almighty God was not dependent upon the organization accomplished by that earlier church council.
- (c) Nor was the hand of God waxed short that he should only be able to accomplish his purpose in one way. If Matthias was not essential, yet his election was made from pure motives; the apostles offered a *reasonable* service, and they sought divine guidance. Their intention was blessed by the divine approval.

II.—"Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

- (a) The responsibility of opportunity. Each one of us has his port near at hand into which he may run, and failing to seize the moment, as the centurion neglected the harbour because it was not commodious, may drift in the storm and finally be cast upon some desert island. Such is the simile in the word *opportunity*. Such a port was offered to Judas in the society of the divine Master.
- (b) We usually think of a man's life as the measure of his opportunity. While it is fearfully true that beyond the grave there is no repentance, it is less certain that a man may repent at any time this side of the grave. There would seem to be such a thing as a heart hardened beyond the power of repentance. It is not that Judas could not have been forgiven after the betrayal, but that he could not repent.
- (c) He had companied with our Lord for a long time with an external fellowship which should have ripened into a close bond of union. We hear of no trumpet-call of warning in his ears, while slowly he withdrew from the first attraction because he failed to follow it up. No position can guarantee security, whether of spiritual opportunity, or fixed character as of ordination or of the religious life.

III.—"Seeing therefore that some must enter in."

- (a) The divine counsel cannot be thwarted. This lesson combined with the last offers its reflection. The two together present a trial of faith to our limited vision: to faith intellectual, that the two should go on side by side, the repeated immediate failure, and the conviction of the inviolableness of the divine purpose; to faith spiritual, not to be discouraged under failure and disappointment.
- (b) Judas fell: Matthias took his place. Not merely was the place of the traitor supplied, but his final deadly acts were the fulfilment of the divine counsel. Such an example, so awful and so marvellous, at the inauguration of the Church should fill all Christians with holy fear and indestructible confidence.
- (c) This is the confidence of the saints. To step into the place of Judas may well have filled Matthias with apprehension; and the outlook was discouraging enough in days when the Holy Spirit was not yet given. But he knew that the issues were with him who inhabiteth eternity and whose victory knows no defeat.

The Gospel

FEAST OF S. MARK

"The gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."—S. Mark i. 1.

Picture: The Church before the written gospels.

Resolve: to read the holy gospels much, but always with an act of adoration.

I.—*The gospel.*

- (a) The gospel is the fruit of the Resurrection, in which act he was declared to be the Son of God with power (Rom. i. 4). In earlier days he began to preach the good tidings that the kingdom of God is at hand (S. Mark i. 14 ff.); but he was necessarily straitened until after his death and resurrection. The history of the gospel dates from Pentecost, when the power of his resurrection was bestowed upon his disciples.
- (b) What is the gospel? Consider it to be the whole revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Do not seize one aspect, however rich it be in grace, and call that the gospel. Neither is the gospel a set of views, however intensely believed. The gospel is life; it is this which Jesus Christ came to bring, and he has bestowed it upon us in the Church.
- (c) The gospels are not the gospel: they contain a record of the beginning, as S. Mark says. S. Luke rightly says that his first writing was concerned with what Jesus began to do and to teach. On the other hand, they are rightly called gospels, for they are the accounts of him who is the gospel, who is himself the life of men.

II.—*"Jesus Christ the Son of God."*

- (a) The title contains a whole volume of theology: it asserts that Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter, is identified with the Messiah (Christ) of the Old Testament scriptures: and yet further it asserts that this Jesus, the Messiah, is divine. S. John's gospel has declared the same purpose of itself (S. John xx. 31). S. Mark's gospel, as also S. John's, unfolds this purpose by a historical narrative: the life is made to speak for itself. It is more important to study him than to know about him.
- (b) To the Gentile world as well as to the Jewish the truth that he is the Messiah is of fundamental importance. It is the gospel of history and of providence, revealing how the eternal purposes of God are unfolded in the history of the ages, working towards the fulfilment of his will: Jesus Christ gathers up in himself the unfulfilled prophecy of human history, and carries it on in his life in the Church to yet greater issues.
- (c) And the Messiah is the Son of God, not just the best and greatest of men; and too he is Jesus, the Nazarene, the carpenter. The gospel according to S. Mark in the unity of a historical character portrays the human life, the fulfilment of purposes, and the divine person. Fellowship with him in the Christian life harmonizes and unifies the revelation.

III.—*S. Mark's gospel.*

- (a) Consider the illustration of Christian unity. S. Mark belongs by earliest Christian association to the Hellenistic leader Barnabas, and to the forward Church of Antioch. When S. Paul separated, Barnabas and Mark continued together. But in later life he is the companion and interpreter of S. Peter, the apostle of the Hebrews. Thus the Petrine gospel underlies that of the Greek Luke. In Christ is neither Jew nor Greek.
- (b) Mark the range of this gospel: there is no account of the early life, nor are the Resurrection and Ascension dwelt upon. Yet this earliest gospel was circulated among believers, to whom the Resurrection was the greatest conviction of faith. The gospel was not for unbelievers, but for the devout study of disciples. Use it thus.
- (c) The gospel is really anonymous. Tradition has added a name by way of title, and that name is of one whose relation to it is not so direct as that of eye-witness. He who would show Jesus Christ before men must thus hide himself, lest he preach himself and not Christ Jesus.

. The influence of a Good Home

FEAST OF S. MARK

"Take Mark . . . for he is useful to me for ministering."—2 Tim. iv. 11 (R.V.).

Picture: the good influences of a Christian home.

Resolve: to consider whether I am making the best use of my surroundings and gifts.

I.—*His surroundings.*

- (a) He had a good mother. Mary was an early Christian, whose house was the meeting-place for the Christians. The history of the Church is full of good mothers; Timothy, James, and John, probably S. Paul (Gal. i. 15). Think of cases within your own knowledge. Good mothers should be venerated. Pray for all mothers, that they may realize their spiritual gifts. Do not forget your mother if departed.
- (b) He came of good stock. Mary was the aunt of Barnabas (Col. iv. 10, R.V.). It seems as if Cyprus had been the good home from which Mary sprang: an inheritance of good in the family. Consider the value of Christian influence, and pray for those whose lives have affected you for good. We are debtors to our spiritual benefactors.
- (c) With such surroundings John Mark started life with the responsibility of favourable circumstances. Such an advantage must greatly influence our judgment; if my influences have been good a merely average goodness is not a fitting response. To whom much is given of him will much be required.

II.—*Early life.*

- (a) Surely it would be difficult to find any one who started life more favourably: his cousin Barnabas was a prominent leader in Antioch: Mark had him and S. Paul as his elder companions in the glory of the experiences of that missionary visit to Cyprus. S. Paul was fond of young men; both Timothy and Titus were under his training. His failure with John Mark was usefully humbling to him, and perhaps helped him in dealing with these others.
- (b) Difficult to blame S. Mark for his desertion at Pamphylia (Acts xiii. 13): yet more difficult to think that the young "minister" (Acts xiii. 5) was not somewhat headstrong or weak in separating himself from his older companions, seeing that it was not in the heat of the moment that S. Paul expressed his disapproval (Acts xv. 38). Good young men are often over-confident of the justice of what they themselves mean to do.
- (c) But consider the patience of S. Barnabas (Acts xv. 39 ff.). If we treated all young men with the same patience which S. Barnabas showed to his cousin, we should estimate them more rightly, and there would be fewer failures. S. Mark lived to justify the patience. Do I show such patience? Did I not need it when I was younger?

III.—*Patience rewarded.*

- (a) There followed useful service with his cousin, which at length gained S. Paul's approval (Col. iv. 10). It is not given to all to undo early unfavourable impressions, but in Rome (Philemon 24) S. Mark had done this, and later S. Paul desired his company (2 Tim. iv. 11). This approval must have rewarded him for his perseverance after a first failure.
- (b) He was always a subsidiary character attendant on Barnabas, Paul, and Peter (1 Peter v. 13); he was useful for ministering. Not all are born leaders; faithful perseverance, humble service, and to recover from an error, these marks of character are always precious in God's sight. He was proving worthy of his advantages.
- (c) To us the great glory of S. Mark is that he is one of the four evangelists. Even here it is probable that his work is that of an assistant, and that the gospel is really S. Peter's. But it is a noble consecration of his intellectual gifts to have acted as interpreter to the apostle whose life had been spared in answer to the prayers in his mother's house. There is often more danger of the average man not making the best use of his gifts, than of the more richly endowed.

Man's Ultimate Desire

FEAST OF SS. PHILIP AND JAMES

"Lord, shew us the Father and it sufficeth us."—S. John xiv. 8.

Picture: S. Philip's eager attention to the conversation; a modest disciple who had drunk deeply of our Lord's teaching.

Pray: that the same desire may be yours.

I.—*The ultimate desire of man.*

- (a) It would seem that mankind has almost always had perception of some relationship which is not material, and has striven after its realization. In almost every individual there is, or has been, a conscious effort after the same; he seems to carry about in the constitution of his being the conviction that he is not merely material. Developed to a high degree, this aspiration stretches out towards personal fellowship.
- (b) This yearning of man has expressed itself in many ways, and it is by a long course of training that the human mind has been developed. Consider that even to-day the fellowship realized by the Christian is but a beginning, and that the expression of it in language under the symbol of *Father* is a meagre representation of the restful satisfaction of desires which are at the same time being raised towards some fuller experience of life which as yet cannot be expressed.
- (c) S. Philip's request lays open to us the conviction of the heart, that we seek not only harmony between the spiritual within and without, but that this also involves the realization of harmony with one another. The social aspiration of man has struggled for recognition from the earliest realization of the clan. The *Father* expresses the ultimate assurance of this realization, and the Christian society struggles to express it in daily life.

II.—*"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."*

- (a) Jesus Christ has interpreted the Father to us in terms of human life. That which he is, and has revealed in his life among us, is the making known to us of the Father, for "I and my Father are one." This has often been misunderstood, and the Son regarded rather as shielding from the Father than as unfolding the revelation of him.
- (b) The crucifixion, which followed this conversation, is part of this unfolding. Consider this both from the fellowship between the Father and the Son realized therein, and also from the fellowship of Jesus Christ with us as made known through the cross. The self-sacrifice of God is the expression of Fatherhood; the universality of its scope makes known to us the yearning of the Father over all the sons scattered abroad.
- (c) The Resurrection is again a revelation of the Father, making known his power in relation to the problem of human life, gathering together into one the race which had been separated from him and from one another through sin. So the Son declares that he ascends to my Father and your Father.

III.—*"No one cometh to the Father but by me."*

- (a) In simplest literalness it is true that no man has approached Almighty God as Father saving through Jesus Christ, who so revealed him. It is he who has brought the Father into individual closeness with the experience of the child of God, and with the simple-minded. It was thus that he drew the hearts of the common people and the heavy laden.
- (b) In deeper fulness all come through him alone. Only through the Son can we learn the Father. However devious are the ways in which the Father draws men to himself, they are, we Christians believe, paths which have been made by the Son of man, even where we are not able to trace them out.
- (c) Thus the following of Christ is a perpetual progress towards an assured end; and it is not a selfish indulgence, but an expansion into the whole life of God. It is his Ascension which gives the fullest light upon the truth of his answer to Philip's enquiry.

The Law of Liberty

FEAST OF SS. PHILIP AND JAMES

"*The perfect law of liberty.*"—S. James i. 25.

Consider: that the ascended Christ is the manifestation of perfect human liberty.

Pray: to appreciate Christian liberty rightly.

I.—*Liberty.*

- (a) A moral condition. S. James speaks of it as a law. It is a Christian principle, and one not to be feared just because we see dangers in it. S. Paul boldly preached it to the Galatians, although they were so little educated to freedom. So S. James contrasts it with the law which was a yoke. This law is liberty because it is the law of the spirit, written in the heart (Jer. xxxi. 33).
- (b) God made us for freedom; freedom for one's fullest development is involved in freedom for one's highest development. It is man who has cramped his freedom, not Almighty God who has been jealous of it. Indeed, he always works for it. See Ps. cxix. 32, 45, etc.
- (c) Then pass in thought to Jesus Christ and his revelation (S. Matt. v. 17): it is this revelation of himself which sets us free, for there is in it a new spirit and the gift of grace apart from which we cannot be free. This freedom is for kings (S. James ii. 8), not for slaves. On this matter of freedom there is no breach of harmony between S. Paul and S. James; and S. Philip was feeling after it when he said, "Lord, show us the *Father*, and it sufficeth us."

II.—*The discipline of liberty.*

- (a) Just because liberty is a moral condition, it must be attained. The Christian must grow up into liberty in all things. "With freedom did Christ set us free; stand fast therefore" (Gal. v. 1, R.V.). It is to us no liberty if it cannot be enjoyed by proper use: and the whole Christian life is one long education in freedom. His service is perfect freedom, when we have grown up into it.
- (b) This is one way, and a right way, of explaining to one's self what one is sometimes tempted to complain of as restraint. It is the qualifying for the service of freedom: even kings must be educated to use their freedom or they will lose it. And S. Paul has taught us that all things are lawful, but all things do not edify, nor are all things expedient.
- (c) Socially we are inclined to think of individual liberty being restricted in the interest of the community, mistaking unbridled license for liberty, and thinking that man can be free alone. The only freedom is that of a free man among free men. There is no such thing as selfish freedom, and the full perfection of the Church is the ultimate attainment of liberty. We must grow up together into the Head in all things (Eph. iv. 15).

III.—*The experience of liberty.*

- (a) Realized first in the breaking off of the yoke of sin by the power of divine grace, we begin to realize the gift of freedom for which we have been set free; realizing it we find that it fulfils the law of our being. Meanwhile its growth is hampered by inexperience of fellowship with God and by the limits which a separated individuality puts upon our true development. True liberty is only to be realized in the Body of Christ, and its characteristic is love.
- (b) But in fellowship with him the capacity of appreciating liberty goes hand in hand with the personal interpretation of himself to the individual life, until the Christian realizes that he has no other liberty than in conformity with him. At this stage every breach of fellowship is realized as a cramping of one's true development, an approach to the loss of liberty by being brought near to subjection.
- (c) Heaven is what we mean by the fullest experience of freedom: it is the attainment to the fullest service as the perfected realization of the ideal of human development. This service is of God, and is corporate. And in view of this, S. James warns us that liberty is a growth: we are to continue in it, and are so to speak and act as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty (ii. 12).

Belief in the Atoning Death

FEAST OF THE HOLY CROSS

"Who died for us."—1 Thess. v. 10.

Picture: the crucifixion.

Resolution: acts of faith and thanksgiving.

I.—*Belief more than explanation.*

- (a) Many theories of the atonement, expressed in the symbols of human experience and relationship; slavery, sacrifice, acquittal, and most happily of all the forgiveness of a child by its parent. But at best they can only be of some help, and cannot adequately express the relationship between man and the God of holiness and love.
- (b) Great relief to turn from such finite expositions to the Creed of Christians, and to express our belief not in interpretations but in facts. "I believe in Jesus Christ . . . crucified, dead, and buried." And yet further, not even finally in facts, but in the person of whom these facts are revelation. "I believe in Jesus Christ."
- (c) When sin lies on the conscience, one seeks not an intelligible theory of the atonement but the heart of Almighty God, who is ready to forgive in Jesus Christ. When death is at the door it is not an explanation but the divine person which satisfies: "By thy cross and passion, by thy precious death and burial, Good Lord deliver us." "O Saviour of the world," etc.

II.—*Earliest Christian testimony.*

- (a) The New Testament offers no explanation, although the writers often use symbolic language suited to their age. About twenty-two years after the death of Christ, S. Paul sent a letter in which he wrote almost incidentally as a truth which no Christian would wish to doubt, "God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us" (1 Thess. v. 9-10).
- (b) The letter to Galatia is thoroughly controversial. It belied S. Paul now to write guardedly about the value or the exact effect of Christ's death. Had he exaggerated he would have damaged his case irretrievably by proving himself an innovator, as his opponents asserted him to be. And the emphasis of his language is due to the fact that he was appealing to the very basis of Christianity when he argued against the Judaizing party that they were making Christ's death superfluous (see Gal. ii. 21).
- (c) To the Corinthians he gave a brief summary of Christian doctrine, and put in the chief place, that which he had received as the Christian belief, about seven years after the Crucifixion, how that Christ died for our sins (1 Cor. xv. 3).

III.—*The cross and sin.*

- (a) The cross claims to be the climax of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, which has dealt with the sinful state of man in relation to himself. It is not the right approach to this to ask whether Christ must have died, but rather to say, Christ has died; for this he was sent into the world, and it is just inconceivable that he should have died superfluously.
- (b) He foretold his death, and it was the accomplishment of a set purpose, as was also the salvation of man. Are these purposes separable? And I am convinced that he did not die in vain. If I could believe that his death was a failure, faith in God would be shattered by the blow.
- (c) This, too, I can see as I look at the cross, that it is a stupendous revelation of the holiness of God. Such is sin in his sight that the death of Jesus Christ was not reckoned by him as too much. This revelation teaches me that holiness cannot brook sin, put it aside by mere good nature, forgive it lightly and easily: it is a revelation of the difficulty of the forgiveness of sins.

Suffering Persecution

FEAST OF THE HOLY CROSS

"Lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ."—Gal. vi. 12.

Picture : a Christian martyr.

Resolve : to endure hardness by some definite act.

I.—Consider the circumstances.

- (a) S. Paul assigns an evil motive to his opponents; always a dangerous thing to do. Elsewhere he has shown that he can estimate the Jews (Rom. x. 2) and the Judaizing Christians (Phil. i. 15-18) more generously. In Galatia his opponents had been guilty of personal abuse, defamation of character, and above all they were robbing Christ of his glory.
- (b) S. Paul felt that behind their zeal for the law, and their imperfectly apprehended Christianity, lay a desire to escape from the odium of rejecting Moses, and of incurring the reproach of the cross. Loyalty to the truth and to his disciples required that S. Paul should give no uncertain sound. There is such a thing as a love of ease which masks itself behind the semblance of charity.
- (c) We need not deny that these opponents thought they were acting rightly. Moral cowardice has a very deteriorating effect on character and intellect: it prevents many from acknowledging to themselves how evil are the practices and conversations of the society in which they move uneasily as in it and not of it.

II.—To suffer persecution.

- (a) The cross implies it. It has no meaning unless it be to glory in the only principle of life: I live by dying. Fellowship with Christ is incorporation in him whose life was the denial of self: in him I die upon the cross. "Jesus hath many lovers of his heavenly kingdom, but few bearers of his cross" (*De Imit.* Bk. II. chap. xi.).
- (b) As the cross is the denial of self so it is of necessity the badge of self-discipline; only thus can it be the preparation of character for the Christian's faithfulness unto death. It is not enough to be good, although this is hard enough; the cross demands a reforming aggressive character which can hate evil. A soft character has no place on the cross, unless it be there to be hardened.
- (c) As the denial of self the cross is of necessity unpopular with the world. Christianity is untrue to the cross in so far as it is tolerated where it is not dominant. To suffer persecution for the cross is proof of loyalty. If we do not ever feel the shame of the cross, or suffer for it, in what way are we followers of his cross?

III.—The Christian wills to suffer persecution.

- (a) He wills it from duty. Long before the mortification of the cross has accomplished its work in him, he sets himself of duty to oppose evil and non-Christian standards. It is not his to make the best of the world as his own, but to pass through it as an alien. As he resists evil in himself, although it may still attract him, so he resists it in the world.
- (b) He wills it by devotion to the author of his salvation, because evil is hateful to him; because, too, he purchased his salvation by resistance to the evil, which brought persecution upon him. Many think they are devoted to him, who are only devoted to their own selfish idea of him: he does not draw them, but they would get what they can out of him.
- (c) He wills it by identification with the Crucified. It is of the essence of Christianity that its author conforms his disciples to himself. He cannot remain a Christian who loves himself, who will not endure hardness and contradiction; and as the work of grace proceeds, the mind of Christ—the crucified—is formed in him.

My Times are in Thy Hand

FEAST OF S. JOHN ANTE PORT. LAT.

"Lord, and what shall this man do?"—S. John xxi. 21.

Picture: S. John in old age, contemplating his past life.

Resolve: "My times are in thy hand."

I.—*Life's prospect.*

- (a) How often one has thus speculated over a young life! Give due heed to the importance of life's influence for good or for evil, and make such thoughts strengthen you in prayer for children and those on the threshold of life's full responsibility. Realize their need of divine strength.
- (b) S. Peter had just received strange foreshadowings of his life, not yet understood; they pointed in some way to the curbing of his independence; they were understood afterwards to foretell his death. In the spirit of intimacy he asks about his fellow-disciple, humbly feeling that he was more worthy than himself of a special pronouncement. Would that I, if God ever vouchsafe me a special word in meditation or in answer to prayer, were thus humble!
- (c) But to each as God will, which is the same as to each as God knows best. To the active Peter a warning that activity is not the highest grace: to John an apparent refusal, which contained the hint of his mystical life. It is not the sufferings of Patmos, the conflicts with heresy, the persecution of intended martyrdom; the Lord foreshadows only the long trial of waiting.

II.—*"What is that to thee?"*

- (a) Thank God that the future is veiled, and do not think that you would have acted better if you had known what was in store. Faithfulness in a few things is the only sound preparation. Many a one would break down if he knew what in the divine providence was in store for him when grace has prepared him. And others would fail in the few things, despising them in the prospect of the many things.
- (b) The true lesson is to trust one's life, and the lives of others, in the hands of God. What lies before is in God's keeping; he prepares his disciple for what he is preparing for him. Therefore keep close to him. Only to do his will day by day, and then all will be right that seems most wrong. "Follow thou me."
- (c) The old lesson of early days (S. Matt. iv. 19) is repeated with deeper unfolding. Then to become a fisher of men; now to foreshadow darker trials. Life is at every stage a preparation for the next step; and each step is intimately related to the fulfilment of the vocation of the whole life. At every stage the lesson is "Follow me," who am the end as the beginning of thy life; but every step is an unfolding of fellowship through following (1 Peter ii. 21).

III.—*"If I will that he tarry till I come."*

- (a) The disciples did not yet know the delay in his coming, nor were they yet in any doubt that his coming would be soon (2 Peter iii. 4). The words implied to them at the moment that Peter would not live but that John would live until the return of the Lord who standeth before the door. Meditate frequently on the same truths of revelation, that they may gradually unfold their meaning.
- (b) Thus S. John, by meditation upon the revelation of life, as he has seen it in the Life of lives, has come to understand the saying which at first was dark. From waiting until he should return he has passed into the fellowship of present love. He has learned to tarry alone with Christ in communing, the last of those who saw and handled. He has passed through the conflict of heresy to the fellowship of the eternal Christ.
- (c) The experience of to-day's festival was an act of faith in Christ triumphing over mere conviction of what was in store for him. If by prolonged life he was interpreting the words as others came to interpret them (S. John xxi. 23) this facing of martyrdom was a following of Christ as when Abraham offered up his only son, who was to be the heir of his promises. If he hailed this martyrdom as the coming of Christ to him he was to find that he had not yet come to the end of the words of Christ. But he followed Christ, as every one must do who will tarry till he come.

A Good Man

FEAST OF S. BARNABAS

"*The Son of Consolation.*"—Acts iv. 36.—"*He was a good man.*"—Acts xi. 24.

Picture: S. Barnabas introducing S. Paul to the Church in Jerusalem.

Pray: for the grace of the Holy Spirit to sanctify natural gifts.

I.—*The son of consolation.*

- (a) Not at all manifest why "Barnabas" should have been supposed to mean "Son of Paraklesis," but the name is very suitable to him. Like Paraclete, this word is best not translated by "consolation" but by encouragement or exhortation. Consider his powers of edification at Antioch (xi. 23, 26; xiii. 1); he was a prophet and teacher.
- (b) His gifts of character were raised to the highest capacity by his spiritual gifts: he was full of the Holy Ghost and of faith (xi. 24), so that we can understand that much people was added to the Church in Antioch. He who would use his intellectual gifts to the fullest must be likewise full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.
- (c) Paraklesis marks a strong character. His advocacy of S. Paul in Jerusalem was a brave deed (Acts ix. 27); he shared S. Paul's courage (Acts xiii. 46; xiv. 3; connect "therefore" with ver. 2); and with him fought the battle of freedom at Jerusalem (Acts xv.); he dared to have a strong dispute with S. Paul over a matter on which they differed (Acts xv. 39).

II.—"*He was a good man.*"

- (a) The word expresses what we should better understand by *kind*. To be known as a man of habitually kindly actions is not to be confounded with a weak character. Some indeed are kind through weakness; this is a defect. Other weak people are kind, and it is a redeeming trait; it is a special mark of grace for strong people to be kind, for strength is apt to be forgetful of such refinements of grace, whether it be intellectual strength or strength of will; and S. Barnabas had both strengths.
- (b) His kindness is seen in his championing of S. Paul, who needed Christian support just when the Church of Jerusalem viewed him with suspicion. It was manifested earlier in the sale of his possessions (iv. 36, 37), and it is shown again in his patient treatment of his cousin Mark.
- (c) Such is the way of kindness; every one of these acts was of supererogation, and was of a character not so quickly observed as the gifts of intellect and will. It is easy to excuse one's self for neglecting such acts; lack of time, need of firmness, etc. But it is well to consider others and do the thoughtful thing in a nice way. These are marks of the "Singular gifts of the Holy Spirit."

III.—*Side lights on S. Barnabas.*

- (a) The saints of God illustrate in various ways the fulness of the Spirit. S. Barnabas shows how his illuminating grace may make an able strong man to be kindly, thoughtful and patient, self-surrendering and unobtrusive. Nothing is more beautiful in his life than the way in which the patron of S. Paul was contented to become the second figure in the first missionary journey.
- (b) He and S. Paul must have been mutually helpful to each other. No doubt S. Paul realized that he owed much to him. And when S. Paul found Mark helpful to ministering he must have felt that Barnabas had won in their dispute. And Barnabas learned from S. Paul on that first journey, and when rebuked by him at Antioch (Gal. ii. 13).
- (c) It is given to no saint to be perfect. At Antioch he was carried away (Gal. ii. 13), swayed by S. Peter. The strong man showed weakness; he was led by S. Peter, who was, however, not afraid to withstand S. Paul. The able Barnabas was here moved by sophisms, who had hitherto been a leader in the forward section. Perhaps it was a mistaken kindness. It is well to beware of one's strong points.

Single-mindedness

FEAST OF S. JOHN BAPTIST

"He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."—S. Mark xiii. 13.

Consider : John the Baptist as a type of the spiritual life.

Pray : for the grace of single-mindedness.

I.—*His spiritual sight.*

- (a) A life-long intimacy with the Lord did not lead him to despise him as the son of a carpenter, a village companion; but brought him forth as his herald. This was the response of his life to the parents' prayers which God had heard: he was filled with the Holy Ghost (S. Luke i. 15).
- (b) To each is given his contribution to the heralding of Jesus Christ. To S. John Baptist he was the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. In the revelation of his religious training he had seized the spiritual truth which it foreshadowed; to him it spoke of a sin-bearing, and in Jesus of Nazareth there was revealed to him the Lamb which God should provide.
- (c) Such spiritual sight is not a placid contemplation, or gift received without labour. Hardness of life preceded the bestowal of the spiritual favour, and followed it: severe disregard of self. "Are ye able?" is a question which must be put to any one who would make great requests of God. It was said of him, to whom it was given first to see in him the Lamb of God, that there is not a greater born of women.

II.—*His hardness.*

- (a) Consider the self-discipline of his life, its plainness and retirement. He did not court the world, and therefore he could tell it the truth. He did not make his happiness dependent on indulgences, and so he could be happy without them.
- (b) Consider his boldness, whether before the people or in the court of Herod. To him peace was not the first aim of life; nor did he seek retirement because of timidity or of natural shrinking. The life of such retirement as his is for the strong and bold, who have disciplined themselves, that their boldness may be of God and not of man.
- (c) Consider his self-repression as illustrated in relation to Jesus Christ. I am a voice—One greater than I. It is said that John did no miracle. In this characteristic we see very fitly the fruit of his life of discipline; but the fruit of discipline is itself part of the discipline of life. Do not think that all things are easy to the saints.

III.—*His power of persistence.*

- (a) Mere sentiment of piety dies away in the presence of stern reality; and mere hardness may lead to reaction or to harshness; and sheer self-repression will lead to negation. There must be some power which holds the balance, and which sanctifies, and which gives the spring or freshness of persistence.
- (b) Such persevering enthusiasm marks the solid depth of his reality. He was not trying to do the correct thing at each stage, or the heroic; he did the thing which to him seemed natural, and it was to him the obviously right thing because his whole character was right and single and clear. Mark the simple directness of his preaching, as the outcome of his reality.
- (c) We do not know for how long he preached, but he was what men would call a success. Yet he was not turned from his course by so great a change from his hidden life. Truly detached in spirit, and not merely cut off from the world by a desert exile, he persisted in his allegiance when driven into the involuntary retirement of prison, and in the eclipse of his life he found strength to support him. It is the reward of single-mindedness.

Communion and Prayer

FEAST OF S. JOHN BAPTIST

"Thy prayer is heard and—,"—S. Luke i. 13.

Picture: Zacharias in the temple.

Resolve: that my life be a round of communion and prayer.

I.—*Zacharias and his prayer.*

- (a) His prayer was for the Messianic advent. The answer not only assured him and encouraged him in so good and unselfish a prayer, but also showed him that in his devotion to the divine glory he was to find the satisfaction of his disappointed life. He who truly prays "Thy kingdom come," will not himself be forgotten or neglected by God.
- (b) The parents, childless, had devoted themselves in self-forgetfulness to the glory of God. They had accepted the divine will for themselves, and were thereby prepared in heart to receive the divine predestination for them. How full of self are most of our prayers, even when we pray for spiritual things—"Give me this," "Spare me that," "Take away this temptation." Be generous in prayer, and you will receive more grace.
- (c) With this temple life of Zacharias and his prayer compare the devotional life of the devout communicant. He, too, is dedicated to the glory of God in the unfolding of the kingdom of the Messiah. Is his prayer, as he goes into the temple of God, one which can be so richly answered? The answer may be one which he is not ready at first to receive: dumbness may fall on him; but in the strength of the Blessed Sacrament he will be braced, and then his tongue will be loosened and he will praise God.

II.—*The answer to his prayer.*

- (a) John, the recluse, the preacher, the prisoner. Most of his life was probably beyond the days of Zacharias; yet the father was satisfied and said his *Benedictus*. His life was linked with prayer, and each event was an answer to prayer.
- (b) But unlike was the answer to the prayer. He asked for God's kingdom and was given a son. So in the Blessed Sacrament we ask for big things and seem to be given little things, just grace for to-day. And yet these little things bring us close to the things which are bigger than we had dared to pray for.
- (c) He prayed for a cause and was given a person. We pray for this and for that, and in the Blessed Sacrament we are given the Son, the true John, the Beloved. And in him he gives us all, that we may appropriate just so much as conformity to grace enables us to receive into our lives.

III.—*John a type of the good communicant.*

- (a) He is contrasted with the new kingdom, yet he was declared to be such as was without parallel. Consider the utter barrenness of human life without the sacraments, and that the unique John could only hand on the natural, could only baptize with water.
- (b) The teaching of repentance. John lacked the sacramental gift, but he prepared the heart to that condition without which the sacramental gift is a savour of death unto death. Think not to rely upon spiritual privilege in a spirit of complacency, saying, "We have Abraham for our father." Rather than submit to such abuse of his gifts, Almighty God will raise up to himself children from the stones of dead hearts. Yea, the very harlots shall enter the kingdom of heaven before such.
- (c) His faith. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand"; worthy son of Zacharias, he follows in the footsteps of his father. And so the child of unselfish prayer progresses from strength to strength. "Behold the Lamb of God"; "He must increase, but I must decrease." It was faith in the dim vision of the undeveloped future. Apply these words of the Baptist to your life of communion. Repentance and faith are the conditions of this life.

The Two Nazirites

FEAST OF S. JOHN BAPTIST

"The child grew, and the Lord blessed him."—Judges xiii. 24. Cp. S. Luke i. 66.

Picture: Samson and John, two nazirites.

Resolve: to trust God's unfolding of vocation.

I.—*Samson and John.*

- (a) In these days how rarely we see a John Baptist, how often a Samson! We watch the spirit of God beginning to move a Christian youth at times (Judges xiii. 25), and yet producing so uncouth a result that we scarcely know how to estimate it. Yet Samson was the offspring of prayer, the child of special vocation. And the epistle to the Hebrews has found room for his name (xi. 32).
- (b) The two have superficial parallels. Both sons of godly parents without children. In each case the father is slow of belief. Both are nazirites from their birth, blessed by God as they grow. The one begins to deliver Israel from the Philistine oppression, yet enters not into the victory; the other leads his companions to the new kingdom, yet remains outside.
- (c) But the differences are profound, and cause us to ponder over the variety of God's dealings with men, until we can learn to trust him where we fear to do harm by action. Samson has the characteristics of his rude age of semi-civilization and partial settlement: John is the spiritual product of the divine training of Judaism.

II.—*The age of Samson and of John.*

- (a) Samson in a formative age. The Philistine struggle was God's means of making a religious and national unity out of the clans of Israel: but Samson did not enter into its heritage; he died before the victory was won. John lived in the most formative age of the world's history, when national unity broke its bonds, and gave birth to a spiritual unity in the new Israel of God. In both cases, while a Samuel and the disciples of John passed over into the new, the nazirite, predestined before birth, died in the old.
- (b) Samson, jocular and rough, seems to fail: yet mark the rude heroism of his death, which befits his age. John, stern but magnificent, dies almost under a cloud. Samson must die with the death of the old age of clans and divided life; John must die that Judaism may die in him. But we have the divine testimony to John, and our faith assures us that Samson also was understood by God.
- (c) Learn to value the truth that Almighty God directs generations and dispensations; his spirit is not limited by the material on which it works, and he moulds the material to his ends. God has not left himself without witness in an age which we may consider barren.

III.—*The Spirit of God moving.*

- (a) How diverse are the ways of God! We expect Samson with his pre-natal vocation to be filled with the Spirit from infancy. We find a young man, like most young men, moved fitfully by the Spirit, and expressing the movement in immature forms. Beware of interfering with the Spirit, and trying to direct his movements.
- (b) John Baptist in infancy plays with the child Jesus. One pictures him growing up to be his first disciple, his chosen leader of the apostolic band. But his life takes on its own forms, externally diverse from the life of him whose forerunner he was. Do not lose faith when vocation and the external form of life are not what you have wished for.
- (c) Samson seems too light-minded for the work of God; John Baptist too austere and exclusive. Man must have his materials very nicely adjusted to his use, for he is a clumsy workman: but Almighty God uses many unlikely tools, for he is the skilled workman, who wastes nothing. Leave all things in the hands of God, and learn by faith in him to have a large hope.

The Friends of God

FEAST OF S. JOHN BAPTIST

"The friend of God."—S. James ii. 23.

"The friend of the bridegroom."—S. John iii. 29.

Picture: the friendship of David and Jonathan.

Resolve: some lesson of the discipline of friendship with God.

I.—*Abraham the friend of God.*

- (a) Out from the old Semitic religion Almighty God revealed to Abraham the secret of personal religion. To this patriarch he brought a clearer realization of his personality, and directed it upon himself, so that Abraham knew his life to be under God's personal direction, and that his direction was part of a larger purpose.
- (b) The history of friendship with God was a long and varied education. It began in the early days, when the conception of the deity was a familiar one, crudely realized. It involved in after ages the discipline of the law, the experience of punishment, and the realization of the transcendence of God. Conceived at first as a mutual covenant, it advanced to the spiritual law written in the heart.
- (c) Jewish religion began with the friend of God, and ended with the friend of the bridegroom. It could go so far and no farther, for any closer relation must be the fruit of the Incarnation, the taking up of manhood into God. S. John Baptist stayed outside the kingdom of God. Like Moses, he led his people into the promised land, but entered not himself, other than through the baptism of blood.

II.—*S. John Baptist the second Abraham.*

- (a) Like Abraham, he rejoiced in effort to see the day of the Messiah, and he saw it and was glad. Like him, he pointed ahead to a kingdom, seeing the promise afar off, and looking for a city that hath foundations. Like him, he experienced his vision through the strain of sacrifice; Abraham, in the trials of his homeless wanderings, John in his desert life; Abraham in the mysterious darkness (Gen. xv. 12), John in the prison uncertainty; Abraham through the sacrifice of Isaac, John through his own death.
- (b) There is a certain unity of life running through all spiritual experience, however diverse the form. We can scarcely think of two whose experiences of religious belief were more diverse than those of Abraham and John. Yet both enjoyed divine friendship. Learn to appreciate this unity of experience beneath the most diverse forms of Christian life.
- (c) And as we grow in fellowship with God, we stretch out our hands to John and to Abraham, and the Old Testament becomes a living record of personal experience, of that friendship with God which makes separateness from the world, leaving us pilgrims and strangers seeking the home where God is all in all.

III.—*The history of friendship with God.*

- (a) Abraham saw but dimly into the friendship; the marvel is that in those far-off days he saw at all. Strengthen faith in what God is able to do. John, at the end of a long education, saw the same truth in fuller light, and has illustrated the wisdom of God in Jewish history. He realized that there was no true friendship with God to be experienced, unless there be the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.
- (b) The friend of God: the friend of the bridegroom. At the end of Jewish history it was realized that friendship with God must be realized in one who is man too. And yet the friendship is not made by man. John shows no human intimacy with the Lamb of God.
- (c) John, as the friend of the bridegroom, prepares for the wedding, and rejoices in the voice of the bridegroom. We Christians, who have entered into the friendship of God through the blood of the peace-offering, and have our part in the Church, which is the bride, have yet much to learn of the intense self-abnegation of John Baptist.

In a Spiritual Prison-House

FEAST OF S. JOHN BAPTIST

"Art thou he that should come?"—S. Matt. xi. 3.

Picture: S. John the Baptist waiting in prison for the return of his messengers.

Resolve: when in any spiritual prison-house to manifest my dark doubts to the Master.

I.—Consider S. John in prison.

- (a) He was an old disciple; had heralded; had seen and recognized. Spiritually as well as intellectually he had reached the heights; he could efface himself. He had active courage as well as the discipline of self-mortification. He was now exalted to the dignity of suffering for his testimony to the truth. Yet there are spiritual temptations which beset the more advanced life; darkness may overcloud the inner light of the saints upon earth.
- (b) His Jewish training had not led him to anticipate the form of the Coming One's manifestation; that he had received him was the reward of grace for the truth to which he held in a crooked world. But now isolation and depression were not without their effect. The disciple is not above his Master, and he too passed to victory through loneliness and the mysterious dereliction.
- (c) His transparent honesty did not desert him: he sent through his disciples to one greater than he. What did it matter to John if he was exhibiting doubt and weakness before him, so long as they were really there, and were obscuring the intimacy! Perhaps, too, there was a silent complaint of his neglect, and he would not stifle it.

II.—Consider the revelation of our Lord's character.

- (a) He understood his servant; the messengers were sent back with an assurance suited to his lion heart. His own testimony was added lest the disciples should misread the Baptist's character, lest his disciples in any age should misunderstand the witness of spiritual depression, apparent failure or neglect, the drying up of the heart when withdrawn from active work. "Go, shew John again": the past experiences are undeniable facts.
- (b) Apparently he left him to suffer and die in isolation: he would not deprive the Baptist of the reward of his life's bravery. Many would rob us of our reward by relieving us of our trials. But the Baptist in his far-off prison was held up by his Master's intercessions, which was far better. He honoured his servant by allowing him to suffer.
- (c) S. John stood at the junction of two ages; he did not pass over into that which he heralded. As such he was none the less dear to his Master, nor the less understood by him. In every age there is spiritual trial for those who like John have delivered their witness, and find that the old wine is good. The unfolding to the coming age of the revelation of God is a perplexity; Art thou he that should come? Learn from the Master how to reverence such.

III.—Consider the question.

- (a) In various ways Jesus Christ is a perplexity to us. It may be through our own unlikeness to him; Can this be the Christ? Perhaps his severity shocks our flabbiness. It may be due to our intellectual timidity: the unfolding problems seem to us adverse or dangerous, and we fear truth. It may be that his way of dealing with us perplexes us. Let us correct our difficulties by further study of him and by inquiry.
- (b) In depression we lose the clear vision; even trial and persecution often have the opposite effect from elevation of spirit: S. John could only recall the bright days of clear testimony on Jordan's bank as a perplexing problem until the message came, "Go, shew John again": then he remembered and knew the good tidings to Zion.
- (c) We must all expect to meet in Jesus Christ with much that is difficult, because so far beyond us. In our own age the trial comes with great force in the light of new problems and new knowledge, social, scientific and critical. This is the strain of discipleship: he is still the Coming One, but the past holds the key to the future; "Go, shew John again."

In the Deserts

FEAST OF S. JOHN BAPTIST

"In the deserts."—S. Luke i. 80.

Picture: S. John Baptist in the desert.

Resolve: to cultivate a spirit of detachment.

I.—*The preparation of detachment.*

- (a) Elijah came from the desert, maturing there his vocation, and acquiring that independence and clearness of vision which enabled him to see the evils of his age and to face them. He had nothing to fear socially from Ahab.
- (b) John Baptist likewise was prepared in the desert by a life of stern severity. In his detached position he was able to see the coming of the kingdom of heaven, and the condition of his country and age in regard to it. And he too had given no hostages to society which would make him tremble for their sake before public opinion or Herod.
- (c) Nor can one easily imagine the Apocalypse of S. John to be written by a man living at ease in the midst of society. The book presupposes his exile, wherein he has been taught to see the Church as God's purpose, himself not being absorbed in its life entangled with the world, wherein God's family and human society are inextricably confused.

II.—*The value of the desert life.*

- (a) Learn to appreciate the value of such detachment. It is easy to see the limitations; but Almighty God does not call all men to be like Elijah, John Baptist and the exile in Patmos. To such as these he does give the special gift, if they are faithful to his call, of seeing the ideal. They sit loose to the opinion of the world and to dependence on its luxury of life; and they keep before our eyes the unworldliness of the Church.
- (b) The Church suffers to-day from being too much in the world; she is pleased with her worldly wisdom, and seeks to be commended for her sound common sense; she becomes occupied with schemes for the improvement of society, and tends to forget her first duty. But for government, and for understanding the affairs of men and mutually adjusting them, the desert life is not God's preparation. To each his own gift.
- (c) Consider that the real value of the religious life to the Church is its witness to the claims of God upon all life. John Baptist made the people, and the publicans and the soldiers understand their life; he did not bid them flee to the desert, but do their duty in the world.

III.—*"In the deserts."*

- (a) The desert life of John Baptist keeps before us the dangers of compromise with the world, against which the soul needs to be armed by the spirit of detachment. The Christian soul strives to realize that the world is desert, with no nourishment to offer. It seeks after God himself in the barrenness of that life which boasts that it is so full of food.
- (b) There is a desert state of the soul, when it is consciously empty and hungry, finding the unsatisfactoriness of life's tempting dainties. Almighty God is drawing such a soul to himself in the world, inviting it to greater use of prayer, meditation, and solitude. He is inviting the soul to sit more loosely to the world, and to seek satisfaction in him. When the world is realized to be a desert, then he fills the hungry soul with fatness. It is the rich, in the fulness of their life and its satisfactions, whom he sends empty away.
- (c) And many devout souls in the world have experienced the utter spiritual incapacity of their life, and its entire weakness and helplessness. Encourage such experiences, and do not be afraid to face the uselessness of many a busy life. It is only as the soul feeds on God that its vocation in the world unfolds itself. He that has the desert spirit of Elijah will even in these days be fed by Elijah's God during the famine that overshadows the land.

Peter and Paul

FEAST OF S. PETER (JUNE 29)

"I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas."—Gal. i. 18 (R.V.).

Picture: the meeting of the two apostles.

Resolve: not to lose unity in face of diversity.

I.—*Peter and Paul.*

- (a) A Galilean fisherman and a Roman citizen of Cilicia. A personal disciple of Jesus Christ, and one who did not know him in the flesh (2 Cor. v. 16 does not refer to knowledge of him in his days of the flesh). The apostle of the circumcision and the apostle of the uncircumcision (Gal. ii. 7). And history has associated them. Admire the unity of variety.
- (b) Peter opened the door to the Gentiles, Acts x., xv. 7), and Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles. Peter was the great preacher of repentance and of the Holy Ghost in Jerusalem; Paul, the great apostle of conversion. Compare Peter in Acts xv. 10 with Paul's anti-Judaistic controversy: Acts xii. with S. Paul's imprisonment in Rome. And the parallelism is presented by S. Luke in remarkable detail (cp. Acts v. 15 with xix. 11, 12; Acts viii., Simon Magus and xiii. Bar-jesus; Acts iii. 1-11 with xiv. 8 ff. and like passages).
- (c) Yet Peter and Paul had one great conflict (Gal. ii. 11). In the limitation of human life, the manifoldness of grace has not yet attained to its perfect unity. But we are too ready to condemn S. Peter, and to assume that S. Paul's estimate cannot be questioned. S. Peter loyally and generously put his convictions into practice, and yet was ready to modify his practice when he learned that it was causing friction and disturbance in Jerusalem.

II.—*Spiritual history.*

- (a) We too readily associate S. Peter with his great spiritual lessons of repentance and renewed conversion. He would seem to some to be so near us because of his falls. Do we not forget that these were in pre-Pentecostal days? The lesson of his character lies in his intensely spiritual perception, and in the deep love, and deep trust in the Lord's forgiveness. He reveals a faith in Jesus Christ which we might call truly Pauline.
- (b) S. Paul, in post-Pentecostal days, by one scene of amazing revelation, experienced a conversion as deep and as personal as is seen in the life of Peter. With entirely different natural character, there is a oneness of experience in the life of fellowship with Christ.
- (c) And Peter, like Paul, is an apostle of supernatural friendship. Peter, James, and John are united (Gospels; Acts iii. 1; iv. 13; viii. 14; xii. 2, 3). John Mark, by very early tradition, is his companion in Rome; Silvanus, another old friend of S. Paul, is also his companion (1 Pet. v. 12). And Peter in Rome writes to the Pauline Churches of Galatia and Asia with a truly Pauline heart and mind (1 Peter, see i. 1).

III.—*Divided, yet united.*

- (a) S. Paul's name suffered an eclipse after his death, as Peter disappeared from Jerusalem to be replaced by James, and then disappears from the history of "Acts" to make place for Paul. But in the history of the Church he emerged into pre-eminent importance.
- (b) And tradition associates them together in death and in liturgical commemoration. Yet Church history divides them; the one is claimed as the foundation of an ecclesiastical supremacy, the other is claimed as the exclusive exponent of special aspects of gospel revelation. On this festival their true union is declared.
- (c) From the bitterness of strife, turn to the personal history. In one delicate problem of practical discretion their judgment diverged (Gal. ii. 11). But when the heat of controversy was passed, S. Paul showed no trace of bitterness. There is no touch of jealousy when in Corinth some regarded Peter rather than himself as their leader (see 1 Cor. iii. 21 ff.). Oh, that such spirit might animate us in the grief of a divided Christendom!

(If June 30th be observed as the Commemoration of S. Paul, see page 425.)

The Prince of the Apostles

FEAST OF S. PETER

"*Thou art Peter.*"—S. Matt. xvi. 18.

Picture: our Lord and the apostolic body.

Resolve: to pray for the peace and unity of the Church.

I.—*Personal priority of S. Peter.*

- (a) He was not the first disciple to be chosen; nor was his priority due to any overmastering ability. His letters cannot compare with the writings of S. Paul and S. John for spiritual originality, or intellectual grasp of revelation. Nor does he appear in the Church as one who saw most clearly how to guide her fortunes: he is rather the appreciator than the inaugurator.
- (b) Yet the priority is beyond contradiction to those who are not influenced by the applications which have been made of it. The words of our Lord are strangely and darkly suggestive of hidden meaning (S. Matt. xvi. 17-19), and may be thought to gain additional force from the charge after the Resurrection (S. John xxi. 15-17). And throughout the gospels Peter is the spokesman of the twelve, and the chief of the inner three. He is presented by S. John as being from the first foreshadowed as the chief (S. John i. 42).
- (c) And "*Acts*" is in full harmony with and develops this priority (i. 15; ii. 14). After his conversion S. Paul went to Jerusalem on purpose to see him (Gal. i. 18). He baptized Cornelius, and thus unlocked the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles (Acts x., xi.; S. Matt. xvi. 19). Upon Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v.), and on Simon (Acts viii. 20, ff.), he first exercised the power of binding. He became known in Samaria (Acts viii. 14), Cæsarea (Acts x.), Antioch (Gal. ii. 11), Rome (1 Peter v. 13), and the provinces (1 Peter i. 1).

II.—"*Thou art Peter.*"

- (a) Next to our blessed Lord no one has been a greater stone of stumbling than S. Peter (S. Luke ii. 34; Cp. 1 Peter ii. 8), unless it be the Holy Mother. Meditation must avoid controversy; its purpose is to see the light of truth in the face of Jesus Christ; and, hidden in his secret places from the strife of tongues, to escape from the exaggerations and reactions of conflicting opinions. It is not the Roman controversy on which to-day I am to think, but upon the divine vocation of S. Peter.
- (b) In the New Testament he represents the unity of the apostolic band, and as such he acts as their spokesman. "Whom say *xē* that I am?" is the question; and see S. John vi. 69. "*We believe.*" Nevertheless, the reply is personal: "*Thou art Peter.*" In the earliest days he stood up "in the midst of the disciples" (Acts i. 15), and "with the eleven" (Acts ii. 14). In his old age he wrote as an elder to the elders (1 Peter v. 1).
- (c) We have often neglected the priority of S. Peter, dwelling too exclusively upon the lapses and the spiritual lessons of his loving and very human life. But his fellow-apostles knew that his priority was not a supremacy over them. They "sent" him and John to Samaria (Acts viii. 14); his brethren not of apostolic rank contended with him (Acts xi. 2). S. Paul rebuked him (Gal. ii. 11, ff.). Do we yet realize the unity of the Church?

III.—"*Upon this rock*" (*petra*).

- (a) Is it on Peter, or on his confession, or on the truth expressed by the confession? Somewhat on all three. The Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. ii. 20), and Peter is the centre of unity. The confession of the apostles voiced by him is the fundamental confession on which the Church lives. And once more no other foundation can man lay than Jesus Christ (1 Cor. iii. 11).
- (b) The indestructibility of the Church may also be regarded in this threefold aspect. The Church, which is Christ himself, his body, cannot be destroyed. Her indestructibility is bound up with her confession of the true faith. Her life is inseparable from the truth of revelation and sacraments secured in the apostolic descent of faith and orders.
- (c) And "the Christ, the Son of the living God," is the true faith which binds together Jew and Gentile in him who has broken down the middle wall of partition (Eph. ii. 11, ff.). Cæsarea and Rome bind east and west, Jew and Gentile. The Messiah, but not according to Jewish ideas, fulfils the promises which unite the divergent elements of Jewish prophecy, and embrace the Gentile world.

Service

FEAST OF S. PETER

"Gird thyself."—Acts xii. 8.

"When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not."—S. John xxi. 18.

Consider: the daily putting on the girdle. Cf. 1 Kings xviii. 46.

Resolve: to pray for the spirit of service, to pray for all religious.

I.—Qualifications of service.

- (a) Promptness. See S. Luke xii. 35, 36. For an Eastern to be ungirded is to be at ease in the house, and unexpectant of any call to service. In the divine service we are never off duty: spiritual alertness must never forsake us: God should never need to call us twice to hear his voice and obey his will.
- (b) Truth of purpose. See Ephesians vi. 14. Such promptness must go deeper than natural sharpness and good desires. There must be deep reverence for truth, and not merely a keen desire to be helpful. And this truth must be your master, so that you cultivate truth of purpose. This involves singleness of purpose and that the purpose be the truth. If the inner springs of the life be relaxed, no activity of service will atone for false or slack purpose.
- (c) Strenuousness of will. See 1 Pet. i. 13. To be properly girded for divine service, truth of purpose must be strenuous: the will must be bent to it in fixed allegiance. It is easy to mean well: the divine service means much more than this; there must also be discipline of thought and reason.

II.—Lessons of service.

- (a) Reverence mere service, not its dignity or its greatness. S. Peter was bidden gird himself for the humbler service, while in prison awaiting the grand service of martyrdom to which S. James had just been called. The lowest service is more than we deserve: qualify yourself spiritually for that.
- (b) It was his lesson, who took a towel and girded himself and washed the disciples' feet. "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet." See S. John xiii. 1-17.
- (c) To serve God is to worship him: the more lowly the service, the greater the act of worship if it be done to him. The moment, however, one is conscious of humiliating one's self one has ceased to worship him, and begun to feed one's pride. Aspire to be counted worthy to serve him in the lowest creature.

III.—The discipline of the girdle (S. John xxi. 18).

- (a) Patience. "When thou shalt be old." S. Peter when young girded himself. The girding was then a matter of keenness: its discipline lay before him. A hard part of the discipline lies in self-repression. Later on, when one is getting old and energy is less buoyant, the discipline will take a yet severer form. The words also suggest the need of patience under the slow progress made in self-discipline: it is a life-long lesson.
- (b) Self-surrender. "Another shall gird thee." This is a hard thing: it is one thing to gird one's self for service, it is another thing to suffer service. And this may be in a variety of ways: some by doing service under obedience and not of their own initiative; others serve by suffering wrong, as when the Roman soldiers girded S. Peter in Rome for his martyrdom; others again serve by submitting to receive service from others.
- (c) Annihilation of self. "And carry thee whither thou wouldest not." It was to be to his martyrdom (S. John xxi. 19). The discipline of service throughout his life was his preparation to serve him in his death. All the discipline of life is to prepare us for our martyrdom in will—in fact, if God will. You might consider here also the divine Master submitting to be bound by enemies for his voluntary sacrifice, and that he might have dispersed with a look those who were binding the arms of God.

Spiritual Growth

FEAST OF S. PETER

"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."—S. Luke v. 8.

Picture: the scene.

Pray: for spiritual growth.

I.—*The words in relation to S. Peter.*

- (a) Contrast them with those of the Gadarenes, who "besought him that he would depart out of their coasts" (S. Matt. viii. 34). They too had just seen a miracle and recognized a power; they too feared, but were not attracted; they only realized a material loss, and all that they sought was to be rid of the power. The state of the callous heart.
- (b) Nor were S. Peter's words those of the stricken sinner, taken "red-handed," and who sees hell opened before him. Nor even in less violent degree was this the condition of the disciple; for he was not at the commencement of his spiritual experiences. The brother of Andrew and kindred to him in spirit, to whom the first disciple turned to say, "We have found the Messiah;" him had he followed, and he had seen his miracles.
- (c) But it was the vivid realization of God's personal contact: see Job xlii. 5, 6. His discipleship hitherto had been a preparation for this through unfolding experience of the Master: now the truth came home through a sense of failure and in response to an act of blind obedience. His cry was more akin to that of the angels who veil their faces, than of the guilty who cry to the rocks to fall on them.

II.—*Growth.*

- (a) Learn not to be impatient with self, while doing rightly to be dissatisfied. One requires longer time and more faithful response before perceiving the reality of him as a matter of experience. Let God's patience be your guide, who waits to reveal himself more fully until the response shall be equivalent to "Go not from me, for without thee I cannot live."
- (b) This revelation of God waits until the disciple begins to think more of God than of himself. At first he is often occupied with penitence and progress, and God deals with him gently and encouragingly. At this stage any other revelation might break the bruised reed. But by degrees the disciple seeks God for himself, and when the heart is becoming established he draws it up by sterner revelations and by sounding greater depths.
- (c) Meditate much upon God as the goal of life, and do not be afraid to realize your righteousness to be as filthy rags. It is the beginning of greater things, but not the last day of nature; S. Peter had yet to be rebuked, was yet to deny; but his life had advanced to the stage of maturity, he was beginning to be seen as Cephas, the ground was preparing for the rock-like confession.

III.—*Application.*

- (a) It is from lack of meditation upon God that Christian life is often trifling and unimpressive. Oh! for the reverent sense of God's hand upon one, that consciousness of the presence which fills heaven and earth with its glory! Moses was hidden in the rock and covered by God's hand that he might see a glimpse of his glory: we too often shrink from seeing more, lest it should make our life less our own and more his.
- (b) Listen to the words as Jesus Christ heard them. What confidence they should give us when we consider how he rightly interpreted what Peter awkwardly expressed! Better that he understand us than that we understand ourselves; "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men," was his reply.
- (c) Seek to pass beyond the comforts of religion into the severity of God, his sternness, his jealousy. The sinner will by degrees realize these in one way: "Depart ye cursed;" "Thou shalt not come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." The Christian has the same God, but he will learn to know him in union, not in rebellion.

Spiritual Experience

FEAST OF S. PETER

"For he was astonished". . . at the draught of the fishes which they had taken."—S. Luke v. 9.

Picture: the scene on the seashore.

Resolve: to assure myself that blessing follows upon obedience to the will of God. See Faber's hymn "I worship Thee, sweet will of God."

I.—*"Astonished at the draught."*

- (a) It might indeed have astonished Peter if he had gone forth now at his own word and taken a good haul after the failure at night: but has Peter forgotten who gave the order? Does he not know that he commands in order that he may bless? Must it not be that blessing follows every act of obedience, whether we perceive it or not?
- (b) And he had made trial of his omnipotence before now. These were as yet early days, but discipleship had begun; he had been at the wedding feast at Cana, and had seen miracles in the villages (S. Matt. iv. 23 ff.); perhaps his own mother-in-law had been healed (S. Luke iv. 38; S. Matt. viii. 14). But he had not yet learned that "Blessings abound where'er he reigns."
- (c) Peter had a long course of astonishments ahead of him; astonishments at his own history of weakness and failure, at the unfolding revelation of Jesus Christ in his own experience and to the world. When he learned to be astonished at nothing in his own weakness, he would learn to be less astonished at any proof of Christ's power. But this last astonishment never ceases for the disciple.

II.—*"For he was astonished."*

- (a) Sometimes we are astonished at his spiritual workings upon others, unobserved by themselves, because it is the quiet steady work of day after day in the grace given to respond to his call, from which growth in grace is sure and steady. S. Peter might have been yet more astonished if he had perceived what the Lord was doing with himself, instead of only what he was doing with the fish.
- (b) For ourselves our astonishment is too often of the form of perplexity: we do not understand the necessity of the night's failure before the morning's haul. God seems to deal with us mysteriously, if not perversely, or he seems to leave us alone. Some day there will be a great astonishment when we see all the way along which he has led us.
- (c) And his work may be impeded by us, when lack of astonishment springs from unbelief. Peter might have recalled the words to Nathanael "Thou shalt see greater things than these"; but if for spiritual dulness we substitute unbelief in his power, then indeed he can do no mighty works there, because of our unbelief.

III.—*Value of spiritual experience.*

- (a) We are to understand what the will of the Lord is by marking his dealings, tracing the revelation of his holiness, love and power manifested in us, and so increasing in the knowledge of his will as the source of our obedience, and of our joy. We must study to recognize our blessings, and to receive each blessing as the promise of more. There is a dulness of spiritual perception in us which is an effect of inherent sin.
- (b) One result of our meagre obedience in life and work is a limitation of our power to understand the graciousness of the Lord with us. We obey grudgingly, as to a hard master, and so the heart is closed against the true reading of his character. How gladly should we obey, if we realized that it always brings us into loving intimacy with him!
- (c) Often said that man needs two conversions, one from sin, and another from self. In both these spheres we require the experience of God's miracles. The second conversion is the harder; the way to it is through experience of the glory of his will. When we are assured that God's will is best for us, then we shall begin to forsake our own will.

The Consecration of Work

FEAST OF S. PETER

"I go a fishing."—S. John xxi. 3.

Picture: S. Peter returning to his daily work.

Resolve: the consecration of work.

I.—*S. Peter a fisherman.*

- (a) Never altogether separated from his boat while doing his preparatory evangelistic work or learning through discipleship to become an apostle. Now, in the experience of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, waiting for fuller experiences (S. Matt. xxviii. 10), he returns to his trade, not ashamed of it nor dissatisfied with it.
- (b) This life had been, in the natural providence of God, the preparation for what lay before him. We think of the sacredness of carpenter, fisherman, and shepherd; and yet as seen to-day these labours do not appear peculiarly spiritual in their character, or more than other trades fitted to prepare for spiritual work. All work, if it be but useful and honest, may become, under God, the fitting preparation for all that he has for us in the future, though not necessarily for all that we should like to undertake.
- (c) It is not because angling and shepherding are symbolically suggestive of spiritual methods that these duties are to be regarded in any special degree; for no shepherd was chosen to be an apostle, whereas one was a tax-gatherer, whose business vocation is regarded by us as very unlikely to produce an apostle. And while our blessed Lord was a carpenter, he had no carpenter among his disciples.

II.—*The spiritual character of daily work.*

- (a) Peter had memories of divine companionship in his daily life. He had been found by Christ here: he had had Christ in his boat, and Christ had been with Peter in his work. Such associations are the hallowing of work. And we, like Peter, can now do our daily work in the vision of the Resurrection, and find it not a distraction in the life of fellowship, but the place where we shall meet Jesus.
- (b) Foolish people would call it waste of time for one who had S. Peter's experience, to go back to fishing; as they call it such if a priest cleans his doorsteps. But the intention to glorify God hallows all work; and to-day we need not merely to talk of the sacredness of common life but to exemplify it. It is S. Peter who has learnt and taught us to call nothing common or unclean.
- (c) Why this false distinction between "secular" and "sacred" work, and the common impression that most laymen are too busy for "Church" work? When an angel is sent to see that a street urchin is not run over, is he more secular than the angel whom the same Lord God has sent to save a bishop from deadly sin? Let us face it, and let priests teach it, that it is we ourselves who make our daily work either secular or the work of the Church.

III.—*Daily work the training of Christian character.*

- (a) We may not see the application of "I go a fishing," if we think of Peter as trained to be an apostle. But rather think of him in preparation to become a citizen of the heavenly life of service. We may never be called to high service on earth unless we can learn to regard the will of God a high service: but we are certainly in preparation for the service of heaven, and what if we do not make daily life a preparation for that?
- (b) Doubtless S. Peter found that his earlier life had been in some ways a preparation for his apostleship; but it cannot be said to have helped him to preach sermons, write epistles, or endure the restraint of prison life. The preparation lay in the discipline of character through strenuous work, steady perseverance, and enduring patience; and these lessons may be learnt in most kinds of industry, and befit the service of heaven as well as the ministry of an apostle.
- (c) We would often rather do than be; and yet even the former is not denied us if we strive after the latter, while if we neglect the latter the former cannot be ours. For he who is making of his daily life a preparation of himself for heaven is best serving the Church of God in his own age.

The Sanctifying Power of Grace

FEAST OF S. MARY MAGDALENE

"Neither do I condemn thee."—S. John viii. 11.

Picture: S. Mary Magdalene and the blessed Virgin Mary at the cross.

Resolve: A large charity through personal experience of absolution.

I.—*The identity of S. Mary Magdalene.*

- (a) The tradition of the Church has for so long identified Mary Magdalene with the woman that was a sinner (S. Luke vii. 36 ff.) that it would be unreasonable for the purposes of devotion to insist that there is no sufficient reason to support the belief. Rather let me thank God that among his saints he has guided the Church to include such an one.
- (b) The tradition of the Church has found a spiritual appropriateness between the great love of her who was forgiven much, and the personal, the almost emotional, love of the Mary who ministered to him (S. Luke viii. 1-3), who was at the cross, who marked the burial, who hastened on Easter morn, who wept in her agony that the Sacred Body had been removed, and who was the first to whom he revealed himself (S. Mark xvi. 9).
- (c) Appreciate the delicacy of S. Luke, who has hidden the name (vii. 36 ff.), and who, if he identifies the person, has never revealed the past life which Jesus had blotted out. And if, yet further, she is to be recognized in Mary of Bethany, both he and the fourth evangelist have hidden from sight the great cloud which overshadowed the family whom Jesus loved (S. Luke x. 38 ff., S. John xi.).

II.—*The history of S. Mary Magdalene.*

- (a) At one time given over to the power of seven devils, she, raised now by grace to greater height, is to be found among those who followed our blessed Lord (S. Luke viii. 1-3). Those who do not realize that they have sinned much, or been forgiven much, may be cold in their love, but not one who has known the healing of the whole life.
- (b) She is found at the cross of Jesus with Mary his mother (S. John xix. 25). Consider Mary, true mother of Jesus, drawing her closely to her own purity in infinite love, and inviting her to share with her those last moments at the cross. Consider Mary, who has kissed those feet in infancy in the blessed pride of motherhood, drawing to her side Mary who has kissed those feet in penitential love.
- (c) She followed Jesus to his grave, and was found there on Easter day (S. Mark xv. 47). And Jesus, true lover of his penitents, appeared to her first (S. Mark xvi. 9), and made her his minister. She who was weeping at the grave was sent to others who were still mourning and weeping (S. John xx. 11; S. Mark xvi. 10). There is special favour and special work for those who have sinned deeply and have loved deeply.

III.—*"Neither do I condemn thee."*

- (a) So he said to another woman that was a sinner. And his word conveyed the sacrament of absolution. Strengthen your grasp upon this sacrament by these cases, and learn therefrom both his liberality and the healing power of absolution.
- (b) Appreciate the true force of these words. One does not follow in the steps of Jesus by a mere tolerance of sin, comfortably regarded as an exercise of charity, but by learning from him the power of his forgiveness, and by being ready, through experience of its blessedness, to help others to him as fellow-sinners with one's self.
- (c) It is only some to whom is given the special grace to be his ministers to those women who are sinners. Pray that such may never be lacking in the Church, who, through deep love to Jesus as their own Saviour, and filled with the spirit of the holy Mother, can minister as sisters to such as these. Pray that men, taking upon themselves the burden of men's sins, may specially pray alike for their sisters who minister, and their sisters to whom they minister.

Depth of Character

FEAST OF S. JAMES

"Ye know not what ye ask."—S. Matt. xx. 22.

Picture: the two ardent young brothers, with their mother, asking that they may sit one on the right hand and the other on the left in his kingdom.

Pray: for depth of character.

I.—Consider the request.

- (a) "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." We have more to fear from the foe which comes in the guise of parental affection or ambition than from any open foe. There are daily applications of the words, "If a man come to me and hate not his father and mother . . . he cannot be my disciple."
- (b) It was one of mixed motives. Unintentionally there was much selfishness in it towards the other ten disciples. There was a low aim: they sought distinction rather than service. It was an ignorant petition; implying favour and partiality in our Lord, and a most material conception of his kingdom. It was superficial: supposing their request to be one easily granted. It was inadequate: they had by no means counted the cost. Try to sound your own spiritual superficiality.
- (c) But there was a good intention beneath. They desired to be near him; to be intimate with him: this genuineness is made apparent in the conversation that followed. Here is a lesson of charity when we are weighing the mixed motives of others, especially of the young. Here, too, is a lesson of loving confidence in our communings with Christ: he is by no means alienated from us on account of our inexperience, ignorance, superficiality, and the like in prayer, if only our request be out of an honest and good heart.

II.—Consider our Lord's treatment of the request.

- (a) He probed their hearts. This was often his way: he would take a question, see through its depth and its shallowness, and then probe by other questions which made the man go deeper than hitherto he had penetrated. Often when he seems to leave our prayers unanswered, or to perplex us with difficulties, he is thus probing us to make us search deeper into our motives and into the depth of truth.
- (b) But while he probes he accepts. He who searches the depths is not probing to discover whether he shall commit himself to us, but is disciplining and deepening the lives of his own disciples. Thus he says at once, "Ye shall," to their superficial but honestly meant assertion that they could share his cup and his baptism. All discipline is of love, and is the proving in us of the divine acceptance of our life. He has taken us at our word, and will make it true for us.
- (c) His probings should give us great confidence in him. So superficial and inadequate are we in ourselves, that we may well not trust even to our own best promises: but we may trust to his acceptance of them, who sees not only what we are, but what we shall be through his grace. "Ye know not what ye ask," but yet "ye shall." Apply to baptism, confirmation, ordination, the religious life, etc.

III.—His cup and his baptism.

- (a) The cup: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" The baptism: "I have a baptism to be baptized withal, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" The question seems almost cruel in its severity: yet it was the noblest answer to their request, when shorn of all its accidental limitations. They asked to be nearest to him; how could they be nearer than by sharing these with him?
- (b) The way of suffering with him is the road which leads to the right and left-hand seats in his kingdom. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." He entered into his kingdom through suffering, and the disciple is not above his Master. Can we suffer? endure? go down into the depths? He says that we shall have him with us in so doing.
- (c) Yet the right and the left hand seats were not his to grant. Long before we have exhausted the lessons of the cup and the baptism we shall have ceased to have these early ambitions; we shall have learnt to understand quite differently what is the kingdom. He could not grant their request as they asked it: he granted much more than they asked.

Response to Divine Promptings

FEAST OF S. JAMES

"Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall indeed."—S. Matt. xx. 22, 23.

Picture: the two apostles unfolding in their life's experience the truth of our Lord's words.

Pray: for faith to follow the divine promptings.

I.—*Consider their histories.*

- (a) S. James found the truth early in an apostolic martyrdom: to him the promise was fulfilled literally. Life is not to be estimated by the amount of useful work got through, but by the level at which it is lived.
- (b) S. John interpreted the words through a long life of faithful testimony, tarrying till he came (S. John xxi. 22); witnessing, as the last of those who saw (1 S. John i. 1), to a new age under new conditions. The gospel meets every age, and it always involves its disciples in a cup and a baptism.
- (c) In both cases are the words true that to them that love God all things work together for good. In considering the differences of their histories learn not to estimate life by man's standard. In either case here the individual history was the fulfilment of the divine pledge, "Ye shall indeed."

II.—*Mark the question and its answer.*

- (a) It was a pledge to an unknown future. It is common to reflect that all life involves such ventures, not rashly based, but founded upon sound calculation. So too Christian faith can give a good account of itself: it can justify its ventures; they are not wild speculations and gambling in the Christian market. But the venture of faith can only in a very limited degree be a pledge to an unknown future since he to whom it is committed is not unknown, and does not change.
- (b) It was taking the two brothers further than they had calculated upon. And that is what he is always desiring to do with us; thus he leads us on from step to step, in meditation, in vocation. Herein lies the value of high ideals, and here is the need of strenuousness. To move from step to step is only possible, in the face of the unknown, to those who have experimental knowledge of him to sit at whose right hand is the ambition of their life.
- (c) The world cries out against these two; it ridicules enthusiasm which it cannot understand; it is contemptuous at the ideals of the young. The world trusts in itself, that is to its experience of the world; the Christian trusts in God, and his experience of his grace. In the divine providence II. (a) and (b) are necessary, because they draw us out of self and up to him.

III.—*"We are able."*

- (a) It was the right answer: the one he wished to draw from them. We always do well in responding to him, even if we do not understand. We rely not upon the probability of our power in attaining, but on the pledge of his grace guaranteed in the call.
- (b) The answer was necessarily inadequate and superficial. Grace revealed to them its inadequacy in course of time. Not long after this they knew not of what spirit they were, when they wished to call down fire from heaven. So we pass from the bright beginning to the bitterness of discovering our incapacity. This is the discipline of the soul.
- (c) And at length comes "We cannot. Thou canst." This is maturity, and is the work of grace fulfilling the promise "Ye shall." Grace acts on the will, and on the emotions through the will. God can sustain the will, even when we seem to ourselves to have failed. He can keep the will fixed when experience tempts us to withdraw.

The Manifoldness of Grace

FEAST OF S. JAMES

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."—Phil. iv. 19.

Picture: S. Paul the prisoner receiving the liberality of the Philippians.

Resolve: to pay more heed to the bountiful supply of God's grace.

I.—Consider the words.

- (a) "My God." S. Paul seems to say that the Philippians have supplied all his needs, and he knows of only one way in which to make a return: *my God*, on my behalf, will make a suitable acknowledgment. Consider the support to S. Paul of being able to think of God as "My God." He had tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious, and he was not unmindful of his goodness.
- (b) "All your need." The Philippians had supplied his temporal needs; God would supply *their* needs. How simply the words come from him, who had made trial of God and found him faithful in all spiritual necessities. How confidently he assumes that like himself the Philippians could endure all sacrifice rather than be separated from the love of God.
- (c) "His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." By much experience he had assured himself of the inexhaustible resources of the divine storehouse of the heavenly Steward. He was equally sure that this treasury was always open for the distribution of its gifts, because he realized the work of Jesus Christ, and the fellowship with him through whom they had been called into his kingdom now and his glory hereafter (1 Thess. ii. 12).

II.—Consider the Saints commemorated this week.

- (a) In S. Mary Magdalene (July 22) is exemplified the power of grace to overcome sin. By Jesus Christ God supplied all her need in turning her heart from sin's distraction and despair to hope and love in himself and trust in his power. Like a true penitent she is found at the foot of his cross, and is the first to witness the power of his resurrection.
- (b) S. James (July 25) illustrates the power of grace to elevate natural life. By this transforming power an ordinary life was raised to supernatural efficaciousness. The fisherman was bold to attract Herod's attention and to be killed by the sword.
- (c) S. Anne (July 26) reminds us of the power of grace to sanctify the natural relationships of life. He who prepared by grace her who was to be the temple of the divine Word during his nine months' sojourn in her womb, prepared her in this way among others by his sanctifying grace in maternity and home life. He who was to make the family the type of the Church was made according to the flesh of the seed of a sanctified family.

III.—Consider the various workings of grace.

- (a) Many Christians struggle despondently against sin with alternating toleration of it, forgetting him who said "Neither do I condemn thee." The power of grace is not exhausted, grace to change the current of the will, to strengthen its weakness, grace to resist, repent, renew hope when overcome. The sacrament of penance is the means of life-giving grace.
- (b) Many fail to regard the power of grace to transform the natural character into supernatural illumination; they think of grace as synonymous with pardon and divine aid to resist sin. Hence many Christian lives are so largely natural in their character. How are the higher benefits of the sanctifying grace of sacramental communion manifested in my life?
- (c) The Christian society has raised the divine institution of the family to the rank of a sacrament. It is not easy to be a Christian in the home: still less easy to fulfil the spiritual responsibilities of fatherhood and motherhood. Perhaps it is not without significance that the first miracle was the gracing of a wedding.

The Home Life

FEAST OF S. ANNE

"Knowing of whom thou hast learned them."—2 Tim. iii. 14.

Picture: S. Anne teaching the Holy Scriptures to S. Mary.

Resolve: to pray for Christian family life.

I.—*S. Anne the mother of our Lady.*

- (a) Consider the importance which the Church ascribes to the preparation for the Incarnation that our calendar should keep the feast of S. Anne, whose name is not mentioned in Holy Scripture. The festival emphasizes the nurturing of vocation, and the divine predestination. God chose S. Anne and nourished her with grace that she might be the mother of Mary, and might train her aright.
- (b) It is of her flesh that by human generation the Word was made flesh (Rom. i. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 8). A falsely balanced Christianity shrinks from considering the flesh of the Son of God, and therefore it cannot face the sacramental life of the Church. God became incarnate in the Word made flesh, in order that Christ might become incarnate in us.
- (c) The festival of S. Anne reminds us in these days to give thanks to God for the heritage of catholicity in family life. It is no longer so that every one of us has had to learn the true sacramental life by any sense of departure from what he was taught in childhood. This is a matter of great gain. The sacraments are becoming once more a tradition of family godliness.

II.—*S. Anne the educator of our Lady.*

- (a) Consider her fulfilling her duty, but not realizing for what further purpose of God she was training her child. It was she who taught Mary to pray and to study the Scriptures, as she, in after years, was to teach the child Jesus, whose life was to be a prayer without ceasing, and whose heart was stored with the words of the Old Testament.
- (b) It was S. Anne who trained Mary in the whole system of Jewish piety; in those household duties and in that maidenly modesty which she in after life was to teach him who was subject to her, and who was brought up in the family life of the carpenter's home. And Mary's pious upbringing was to manifest full fruit in her maidenly reserve at the Annunciation and during the succeeding months.
- (c) It was S. Anne who taught Mary the spiritual truths and hopes of Judaism, and its Messianic aspirations. And Mary learned her lesson, and could say "Be it unto me according to thy word." And she, pondering on all things, was fitted to be the sympathetic recipient of all the unfoldings of the human life of Jesus, as his mind developed, keeping normal pace with the growth of his body.

III.—*Family life.*

- (a) Picture this pair of family histories: Anne, Mary, Jesus; Lois, Eunice, Timothy (2 Tim. i. 5). And learn to reverence Christian homes, with their spiritual blessings and their mature fruits. Learn also to see in such households the divine spheres of vocation. Mary must resign Jesus; Eunice must give up Timothy. Pray that godly homes may not be selfish in their happiness, and so refuse to respond to vocation.
- (b) Consider the divine care to provide for Jesus the conditions of a full home life. He was not like Samuel sent from his home in early life. There were those near relatives known as "The brethren of the Lord," and his sisters (S. Matt. xii. 55, 56). A foster-father was provided for him, and he had Elizabeth, Zacharias, and John for the wider family circle. And when he would describe the highest blessing, and the severest strain of the new kingdom, his illustrations were chosen from his experience of home life and its blessings (S. Matt. x. 35 ff.; xii. 50).
- (c) Value most highly in these days the maintenance of Christian family life, in view of the loosening of home ties, the laxity of marriage, and the shrinking from family responsibility. It is from Christian homes that the healthful reaction must arise, and from those homes regarded as among the most important spheres of Church work.

The Church Bound

FEAST OF S. PETER'S CHAINS

(LAMMAS DAY)

"Peter therefore was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him."—Acts xii. 5.

Picture: the scenes: S. Peter bound in prison: and Mary's house (ver. 12).

Pray: to be faithful.

I.—*The Church of the apostolic age.*

- (a) Her distress. Never has the Church been in such distress as in those early days of the New Testament record; we forget that as we read the victorious energy of the apostles, and marvel at the growth from such small beginnings. Yet an Agrippa who had not "pleased the Jews" would have been a greater source of danger. We too often count for disaster the opposition of the world and the loss of material advantages, which really only serve to remind the Church of her true possessions.
- (b) Her resources. Continuous prayer to God from the Church—a unanimous besieging of heaven's gate: their hope did not lie chained in prison, but secure in heaven. This unanimity was not formal; it was enthusiastic. In the night many were gathered together in Mary's house praying with this object (ver. 12).
- (c) Her reward. "The word of God grew and multiplied" (ver. 24). The world saw a triumph; James had been beheaded, Peter silenced. But outward circumstances do not form the inventory of the Church's possessions, which is kept in heaven. The Church kept on growing, because she was full of spiritual life from her leaders, who were ready to die, down to her family life of prayer. No one thought of bribing Herod or of making terms with him.

II.—*A true servant of the Church.*

- (a) Hampered by the world. Bound in chains; better these chains than the cords of flattery and alliance. S. Peter had been through it before, rejoicing that he was counted worthy (Acts iv. 3; v. 41). He lay asleep now; Herod could not hurt him; and as to the Church, she was in God's hands, not his. But he is type of a much more serious hampering by the world, whereby the servant of God often finds himself bound in his social life, and the Church bound in her alliances.
- (b) Brave. Brave to endure: was it easier or harder to face the second time? Invincible faith in God does not remove bravery from one's conduct. And now death faced him, following the course of James. Perhaps it was yet braver to face the future when the angel opened the door, and to deny himself the palm of the martyr's doom. It is difficult just to go on enduring unheroically.
- (c) Self-effacing. To S. James be the glory of following in the steps of Stephen and of yet a greater! If God's answer to the Church's prayer be this, he is ready to lose his crown of martyrdom for her service. If really there be work for him to do, he will make a quiet escape to another place (ver. 17), even though the world should call it cowardice.

III.—*The Church of to-day.*

- (a) She too has her distress: but how estimate it rightly! Perhaps the signs we note are—or may be—the very marks of her triumph: yet in what degree are they the stripes of an accepted slavery? It is not that the Church is in the world which makes her worldly, for God put her there; but just for the purpose of her not being worldly: the real distress comes from her worldliness, which diminishes her power; too worldly to draw upon it.
- (b) The true servant of the Church is still one who is brave enough to efface self: to be unworldly in a society parish, to make the spiritual life of the Church a power rather than to make her services or preaching popular. For this we must believe in God.
- (c) The duty of intercession for the whole Church. Many talk of catholicism who do not seriously believe that anything concerns them outside the Church of England, that the Church in other lands can weaken or strengthen us. We cannot grow at the expense of others, but only with them; "If one member suffer all the members suffer with it."

The Transfigured Life

FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

"And was transfigured before them."—S. Matt. xvii. 2.

Picture: the scene.

Pray: to know the glory of the cross in your life.

I.—*The Transfiguration.*

- (a) It is the King in his beauty; and the glory of another world is dawning on us. It is no transitory glory, but the unveiling of the glory which he had before the world was, and to which he has exalted the manhood which he has taken into himself. We are apt to think of the Transfiguration as almost unreal; it was in truth the unveiling of the eternal reality.
- (b) Jesus Christ, who subsisted from all eternity in the essential form of God, counted not this being equal with God as a means of self-aggrandisement, but made himself empty by taking the essential form of a servant. If we would understand that, we must love God; and the Transfiguration is the momentary sight of it as it exists from henceforth. And corresponding to the glory of the vision is the majesty of its revelation: the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, the Passion, immortality and glory.
- (c) It is for us to get behind the transient to the permanent, to pass through the knowledge of the Son of Man to that of the Lord of glory; and through him to have our lives in the eternal verities. "Be ye not fashioned according to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

II.—*The Passion.*

- (a) The Transfiguration was peculiarly in relation to the Passion. "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross": "Humbled himself . . . unto death . . . ; wherefore God hath highly exalted him." That was the primary reading of the Transfiguration to the three, and they were slow to read it. Moses and Elijah spoke of his decease. (And see Matt. xvi. 21, 24.)
- (b) The unrestrained mind is always striving to get rid of the stumbling block of the cross. Any interpretation will do so long as it evades the point of a passion and death effecting atonement. So, too, while trenchantly orthodox, we may be slow and unwilling to face that sin is the ruin of our lives, and that we need to be saved by another than ourselves. The more closely we cling to the cross, the more conscious do we become that the natural heart shrinks from it.
- (c) But further, the Transfiguration is the revelation of the glorified cross. The cross has its two-fold revelation. There is the darkness of Calvary; the cross is no mere semblance of suffering. But there is the revelation on the mount of the beloved Son: the reality of the cross is for his human nature the way of entrance into glory (S. Luke xxiv. 26).

III.—*The transfigured life.*

- (a) He is the supreme example of the principle which is true throughout all human life that glory is through suffering. The sufferings in our lives are to be the marks of a transfiguration which has its foundations in the glory of his passion (Rom. viii. 29). The transfigured cross is to become the starting-point of the transfigured life.
- (b) The life of man is the vision of God. "Surely it must be that I am to behold thee; it cannot be that the vision is to be reproduced in me!" "My child, all is for thee. And wouldest thou find thy cross transfigured? Then stretch thy crucified self upon it, in fellowship with me, and thou shalt find that my life flows into thee, my glory overshadows thee."
- (c) The issue and completeness of this vision is in heaven itself. Now we see darkly, then face to face. Then shall all that we read in the Transfiguration be seen in fulness; but we read by life, not by contemplation only. Heaven cannot contradict the unfolding life of grace as it is working within us (Eph. ii. 4-6).

The Beloved Son

FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

"*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*"—S. Matt. xvii. 5.

Picture: Jesus Christ in his Transfiguration glory.

Resolve: to listen to his voice in the spirit of discipleship as the condition of fulfilling vocation.

I.—*The three voices.*

- (a) At his baptism (S. Matt. iii. 17) the voice heralded his public mission; at the Transfiguration it announced the unfolding of the Passion (S. Luke ix. 31-35). Mission can only be effective through self-abnegation; here as elsewhere he that will save his life shall lose it. S. Peter would have frustrated the divine will (S. Matt. xvi. 22).
- (b) The third voice was in Holy Week (S. John xii. 28); the fulfilment of mission is to glorify the name of the Father. Through the Passion the Father glorified it. In its fulness this threefold sequence is alone fulfilled by him who is the beloved Son, who in fulfilling it accomplished the Father's good pleasure and acquired for his members the merit whereby they may enter into the fellowship of the same triple work.
- (c) Of the three voices the middle one illuminates the sequence: the beloved Son is seen in the majesty of his Only-begottenness (2 Peter i. 16, 17), and the incarnate one is transfigured in his body of humiliation in company with representative saints of the old covenant, who had glorified the Father in the accomplishment of their mission through suffering; and they too appeared in glory.

II.—*The words.*

- (a) "The beloved Son" expresses unique relationship. He is his "one Son, his well-beloved" (S. Mark xii. 6). Abraham's only son (Gen. xxii. 2) is described in the Greek version as "beloved," and we are led to see in the use of the word in the New Testament not only the Father's love but the unreservedness of his gift.
- (b) "On whom my good pleasure rests." The revelation of the only Son is presented as the work of the Father's good will; the divine Son knows that "Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God." It is this Son who is transfigured with glory, and in him alone has vocation any significance to the Christian.
- (c) "Hear him." The permanent utterance of God amid all else that is transitory; the living person of the beloved Son as against all the problems and perplexities of life. Always to hear him is the interpretation of being called in him (S. Matt. xvii. 8), and the transfiguration of the vocation to glorify the Father through self-abnegation.

III.—*A threefold revelation.*

- (a) Hear him in his priestly life on which service he entered at his baptism at the official age of thirty, after the power of an endless life. Hear him in every sacramental and ministerial office of the Church, who can reasonably bear with us because he too hath suffered being tempted.
- (b) Hear him in the prophetic office, before whom Moses and Elijah withdrew. See Deut. xviii. 15. Ever hear him as he unfolds the revelation of God's will involved in whatever vocation is permitted; he will interpret in terms of your own life the revelation which it is the good pleasure of God to vouchsafe to you in him.
- (c) Hear him in his kingly rule on which pre-eminently he entered in Holy Week, as the modern Greeks come to his disciples asking through them to see Jesus (S. John xii. 20-22). Only thus is the mission to be fulfilled. In the Transfiguration see the King as he now is in triumphant glory, and reigning in the hearts of his disciples who listen to his voice.

The Name

FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME

"And he called his name Jesus."—S. Matt. i. 25.

Consider: the revelation of this name to S. Joseph.

Resolve: to use the Holy Name devotionally.

I.—Consider the mystery of the foretold name.

- (a) Of a man one cannot guarantee before what name shall fit him. The name of the great forerunner was ordained before his birth: the name set him apart from his family for his office, and betokened his special relationship to God. But the name, which is being considered, foretold the fulfilment of his office, and predestined the child to be a second Joshua leading the people of God into their Canaan.
- (b) The language used is human. A child is to be born, and to receive a name after the manner of children. We reverence this name as much because of the consubstantiality with ourselves of which it speaks, as for the wondrous office which it announces. It is because it is the *human* name that we bow with reverence at its mention, and that we find it so consoling to dying ears.
- (c) The office attached to the name is beyond man's power. Joshua may lead into a material Canaan; he cannot open the way to the eternal land of promise, which must be entered through the forgiveness of sins. Such fore-announcements befit the birth of one who is to accomplish what God alone can do.

II.—Consider the divine assurance.

- (a) The fore-ordained name is an intimation of divine certainty. He, whom the Father sent into the world, cannot come short of the divine will; he was to be Son of his own substance. Men may receive him or reject, but none the less he cannot fail to fulfil what he came to accomplish.
- (b) But, further, the mystery of the human name represents the confidence of the Father that mankind will not fail to respond. "They will reverence my Son." This appeal of God in human flesh will open the heart to receive grace, nay more than grace, God's very essence.
- (c) There is also in this name the assured revelation of the Christian Church against which the gates of Hades cannot prevail. He shall save *his people*; there is to be the new Israel of God under this greater Joshua. The work of Jesus is not regarded apart from his elect children. Receive this name with deep assurance.

III.—Consider the power of this name.

- (a) Sweetness to believers. Therewith we summon him, bold in our grasp upon its meaning, and claiming all that is associated with it. Learn to recite the name reverently again and again, using it as a prayer, as indeed the summary of all prayer. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name."
- (b) A terror to evil spirits, who know its efficacy and hate its power. To them it speaks of the unloosing of their authority. "Let us alone: what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us?" Apply the name boldly in the face of temptation. Take the name with you when you enter the darkness of fear, and prepare yourself to take it with you as a proved friend through the darkness of death.
- (c) Consider the heavenly exaltation of the human name. To Jesus, in his humanity, who has proved his claim to this name, is given now a name above every name. He is Lord of the new creation, and every tongue shall confess him as *Lord* to the glory of God the Father (Phil. ii. 9-11). Confess him in life as such, not ashamed of him, nor fearing to find the name powerless.

Jesus

FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME

"Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."—S. Matt. i. 21.

Consider: the name "Jesus."

Resolve: acts of devotion to the Holy Name.

I.—*The explanation of the name.*

- (a) It refers salvation to the problem of sin. National salvation had been understood, and it was realized that the Messiah was to be a Saviour of such sort that the character of holiness was a condition of his appearance. But now a fresh light was thrown upon the hope of Israel: the Messiah was to make his own preparation of his people.
- (b) The words used carry the promise much further than forgiveness. It is one thing to be forgiven; it is a much greater thing to overcome. And it is victory of which these words speak: he shall save his people from sin, keeping them far from it. The promise carries our thoughts right on to the end of the revelation which begins in forgiveness, continues in victorious grace, and ends in victory.
- (c) To appreciate the words one must think of the consequences of sin and of sin's snare. The promise is that sin shall no longer have dominion, or even power to torment and tempt. It shall not be able to assail; and the mischief which it has wrought shall be undone, the character being in no way any longer weakened or impaired by its ravages.

II.—*Some reasons for venerating this name.*

- (a) When the angel spoke to S. Joseph, the greatest thing that he could say of this child was his name and its significance. It appeals to every child of man in his greatest need. The strongest proof that can be given of sin's deadly work is that it can produce a spirit of indifference, which is unmoved by the revelation of this name.
- (b) We venerate this name because it tells us of the mighty work of Jesus, which none but he could dare to undertake, who was himself without sin, yet shrank not from sinful man. It tells us of his life of suffering which he endured as the condition of entering into this office of Saviour, and of that death in which it issued.
- (c) There are those to-day who appreciate his unique power over the hearts of men, and the transformation which he has accomplished, and yet deny the source of his power. He stands alone; but they will not confess him as the Saviour. They know that he is not one of the martyrs who have followed in his train, but they will not commit themselves to the one confession which removes him from their ranks and explains the race of martyrs.

III.—*Some reflections on his name.*

- (a) If the eternal Son of God became Jesus for us men and for our salvation, what an awful thing sin must be. Linger upon this name devotionally, that you may the more appreciate the ruin wrought of sin. It is he who is the revelation of sin's nature as no superficial defect in life but as having established itself in possession at its centre. He revealed himself as Saviour, who denied self; he revealed the way of salvation who called man to himself.
- (b) The name moves us to great tenderness because it makes clear to us how intensely Almighty God desires our salvation. It is not that Jesus Christ set himself up as Saviour, but that before his human birth he was given to be such by the voice of Almighty God through the angel.
- (c) We love this holy name because it speaks to us who know him as revealed in his life of attractive and persuasive character, drawing sinners to himself by the revelation of his love to them, and drawing them ever nearer to himself as the work within is bearing fruit.

The Vision

FEAST OF S. BARTHOLOMEW

"Behold, I see the heavens opened."—Acts vii. 56.

Picture: the vision of Jacob's ladder.

Pray: to be counted worthy to see the vision of the dawning life.

I.—*Jacob's vision.*

- (a) Jacob, the exile from his father's home, lying on the hard ground, believed himself to be beyond the reach of God: "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." He saw earth and heaven connected by a ladder, and free communication maintained by the angels. That is the first revelation to the wanderer, that God is still above him, communicates with him, blesses him.
- (b) To each the vision is according to his understanding. To Jacob, knowing little spiritually, it was just a vision that he was not bereft of God. In his simplicity he believed that he had lighted upon the gateway to heaven: the vision contained no rebuke, but a blessing: later in life he would be spiritually fitted for the struggle at the ford Jabbok, and then he would become a prince of God: now he was learning the most gracious stage of the purgative life, its contact with God in blessing, and the vision of a heaven above him with which was communication.
- (c) And he manifested an undeveloped state of mind. While God gave him the returning exile's pledge, "I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of," Jacob replied with an "if." "If God will be with me."

II.—*Nathanael's vision.*

- (a) Nathanael the disciple was a sharer in the revelation of the Incarnation. The ladder which Jacob saw uniting heaven and earth is the Son of God incarnate. He saw into heaven, which the Son of Man opened to all believers. What had been a vision to Jacob is an abiding reality: "Ye shall see the heaven opened;" the disciple is in permanent communication through the Son of Man with heaven itself: it is the promise of the continuing presence of Christ in daily life: "Lo, I am with you all the days."
- (b) And the gift corresponded to the recipient. Nathanael was no guileful Jacob, who supplanted his brother, but an Israelite indeed, a prince of God, living in the illuminative way of fellowship with God; no wanderer from home, but one who sat under his own fig-tree; and so the blessing was not an assurance of ultimate attainment, and a present protection in his wanderings, but an abiding fellowship.
- (c) Jacob manifested inexperience in the faithfulness of God; he was like the beginner who still finds Christ's yoke difficult, and cannot yet trust his grace. But Nathanael was without guile: he brought an honest open-hearted simplicity, which was to make him a friend of Jesus Christ. That is the gift and the joy of the illuminative way.

III.—*Stephen's vision.*

- (a) Stephen, the martyr, had also his vision right into heaven itself, of the glory of God, and Jesus, the Son of Man, standing at the right hand. It differed from Nathanael's, as the Ascension from the Incarnation. Stephen was a disciple of Pentecost; in its power he had lived and striven. Here is no ladder, no angels ascending and descending. He pierced straight into the full vision with which he was united, as one already ascended in mind, and conformed through faithful service to the likeness of his Master. He had reached the unitive way.
- (b) And in harmony with this was the revelation vouchsafed to him. He saw God's glory. Jacob saw only that the top of the ladder reached to heaven: that was his ultimate goal, and it sufficed. Nathanael saw into heaven through fellowship with the Incarnate Son. Stephen saw the beatific vision, and the Son of Man in heaven. Human nature was established in the full enjoyment of heaven's bliss. And the Son of Man was seen, by him to be standing, to help and to receive.
- (c) And his face was as the face of an angel (Acts vi. 15). He had caught the vision of heaven into which he gazed. And no wonder, seeing what were his dying prayers (Acts vii. 59, 60). The unitive way is no luxury of easy delight; it is the road to heaven as his Master had trod it through the death of self and conformity to him. It is more even than to be guileless.

Under the Fig-tree

FEAST OF S. BARTHOLOMEW

"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"—S. John i. 46.

Picture: Nathanael under the fig-tree.

Resolve: to pray for enlargement of vision.

I.—*Under the fig-tree.*

- (a) The guileless Israelite, about to become a disciple and then an apostle, on the eve of his call to an office, the greatness of which he could not realize as yet, and in which he was to be so lost that the identity of his name is even obscure, was under the fig-tree. Reverence the divine wisdom in choice, who seeth not as man seeth.
- (b) The words imply an interior preparation. The true Israelite was praying or reflecting. His thoughts were fixed on the divine promises to Israel in the Messiah, and they were limited by the restrictions of his national life and his religious teaching. But they were single in their purity; Nathanael was waiting for the consolation of Israel.
- (c) Mark too how, when least expecting that he was observed, the disciple was seen by Jesus Christ. And the realization that Jesus Christ saw into his heart convinced the guileless Israelite of his true person. It is only sin, including the worldly frame of mind, which hides from him.

II.—*The limitations of spiritual perception.*

- (a) Who would not be encouraged by any realization that in his prayers Jesus Christ has undoubtedly been a companion! Who would fear spiritual temptation, if he heard Jesus say to him that he knew him in his devout reflections, and could realize as Nathanael did that the words interpreted his questionings and answered his desires! Yet Nathanael is still very limited in his perceptions.
- (b) Be humbly thankful for any evidence that God is helping you in the infirmities of your aspirations. But do not be moved to think of such encouragement with pride, or to suppose that your mind has been delivered from the possibility of error or narrowness. Nathanael has meditated on the Messiahship, but he believes that the promised hope cannot come out of despised Nazareth, or out of that Galilee which the true Jew scarcely regarded as within the sphere of the true Israel.
- (c) And now conviction had come to him: "Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." But neither the strength of his conviction, nor the richness of his creed, which seems to anticipate S. Peter's confession, was the full realization of the faith. Consider Nathanael after Pentecost recalling this scene, and realizing how inadequate was his understanding of Jesus Christ in those early days. Be quite sure that the faith is much larger than you see it to be.

III.—*"Thou shalt see greater things."*

- (a) Devotion, especially the humble reliance on sacramental grace, meditative prayer, and contemplation of the will of God, are ways in which to pass from the material to the spiritual, and from the first vision to further unfoldings. Do not rest satisfied, but go on to know.
- (b) Nathanael was now to begin a life of discipleship; in the following of Jesus, as he unfolded himself to his chosen ones, he was to be led on to greater things. Through the stumbling block of the cross, and the life of the Holy Spirit in him, he was to come at last to do greater things than he had at first even seen in Jesus (S. John xiv. 12).
- (c) But the greatest things are seen, not done. The vision is larger than the human accomplishment. The true vision is to see what God is doing, and to lose one's self in him. To see all life in God is far greater than to see one little thing and to do it, although only by doing the little thing that one does see is the sight strengthened to see the vision. Let service and contemplation go hand in hand, and the experience of each humble soul in the one be conjoined with its experience in the other.

Conformity to the Life of Christ

FEAST OF THE BEHEADING OF S. JOHN BAPTIST

"Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways."—S. Luke i. 76.

Picture: S. John Baptist's death.

Resolve: interior conformity to the life of Christ.

I.—*Preparing the way.*

- (a) To his own age this was manifest. His preaching on the Jordan banks was realized to be a preparation for a Messianic development. Men mused whether he were himself the coming one, and he denied it. But it requires the full revelation of Jesus Christ to realize how deeply and truly he was the preparer of his teaching of repentance, conviction of sin, and stirring of conscience.
- (b) By the self-suppression of his life, pointing to the Lamb of God, and passing over his disciples to the coming one. How many Christians even now have not learnt this lesson, that all that they can do is to point the way and to pass on their disciples to Jesus Christ while they themselves retire.
- (c) It is in such conduct that we appreciate how spiritually deep was the Baptist's preparation. The message was not external to the man, it was the expression of his inner life. It is a true representation of a prophet, that he speaks forth that which Almighty God has revealed in the experience of his own spiritual life.

II.—*"The prophet of the Highest."*

- (a) It is part of the deep significance of the Baptist that he foreshadowed in mystical fellowship an external and an interior conformity to our blessed Lord. Consider him first in the intimacy of infancy and childhood. Do not fear to see in the joy of the unborn John at the Visitation the divine vocation which was to be so wonderfully fulfilled.
- (b) The prophet is seen again in the desert life, wherein he prepared for his ministry. Compare with it the long years of silent preparation at Nazareth, the forty days in the wilderness, and the retreat on the Mount of Transfiguration in the middle of his active life. And some priests think that they can live without an annual retreat. Pray for them.
- (c) He shared with his Master also the experience and temptation of popularity. Men flocked to him; for a time he was the excitement of the spiritual world; there was doubt whether he were not the Messiah. And there was a time when Satan was ready to give to our Lord the kingdoms of the world; men wished to come by force and make him king (S. John vi. 15).

III.—*Interior conformity.*

- (a) And this conformity was not merely one of external circumstances. John resisted the temptation of his circumstances, and was brought into yet closer fellowship. By his rebuke of Herod he incurred his anger and was imprisoned. It may be merely interesting to recall here our Lord's disregard of the same man (S. Luke xiii. 32; xxiii. 9); but John exhibits an interior conformity to him who cared not for any man, nor regarded any man's person (S. Matt. xxii. 16).
- (b) And deeper yet, reaching to depths only to be realized by those who have shared in these former conformities, is the mystery of John's experience of doubt in the solitary darkness of his prison life. "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" And in the darkness of the crucifixion the cry is heard "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
- (c) Such considerations prepare one to enter into the true conformity of John's death to the passion of Jesus Christ. There was no light upon his death scene, shining from the redemptive death of the cross. He prepared the way in deeper truth than he realized, when in utter failure he was overcome by the power of the world, and was beheaded by the order of an irate woman through the weakness of a king who was feebly sorry.

Vocation Realized in Daily Life

FEAST OF S. MATTHEW

"Go back again, for what have I done to thee?"—1 Kings xix. 20.

Picture: the scenes of Elisha's and Matthew's calls.

Pray: that thine eyes may be open to see the daily working of vocation.

I.—*Elisha and Matthew.*

- (a) Consider how the vocations were given: Elijah by the mantle, Jesus Christ by two words: Elijah seemed to disparage the significance of his act, Jesus Christ called in clear simplicity. Forms vary: he who looks for the conventional signs of vocation follows the letter and loses the spirit. The power to perceive vocation lies in the surrender and truth of life: some by not going on to know the Lord rest in a preliminary vocation, as though it were an act once for all. Not so Elisha.
- (b) Both vocations were given in the routine of daily life, not merely to men of business, but while still engaged in it: and there is no limit; the one was a man of the soil, the other came from the mart, in such daily routine of the common round did God prepare their hearts to receive and respond to vocation, when the offer was not attractive.
- (c) In both cases response involved sacrifice: the one made an oblation of his instruments of livelihood, the other gave up his lucrative post. More than this, both offered themselves: "I will very gladly spend and be spent." Men of toil, they were more devoted to God than to their toil. Elijah's rough life offered no attractive promise to his successor; the wandering life of Jesus Christ offered no home and no income to the collector of dues and tolls.

II.—*"Go back again."*

- (a) It was through faithfulness in business-life that they learned the will of God: the illuminated heart may hear the call, and go back literally to the home life and the daily round but in a new spirit, to the old routine but seen now with the prophet's eye. The apostle's history shows what can be done by grace in the discipline of a life of business.
- (b) Or the words may be taken up at a later stage: Elisha and Matthew had their days, after this crisis, of dulness and monotony. There is the trivial round in the fulfilment of all high-sounding vocations, *e.g.* the missionary's, or the novice in his daily tasks. Go back again to the first freshness of spirit by a renewal of fervour.
- (c) Consider this, that there is, however, no such thing as going back: no step in life can be retraced. Elisha could not have gone back, he would have taken up a new life had he returned to the plough, the life of a man who had not responded to the call for which God had trained his life. Matthew could have kept to his business, but it would have been another Matthew.

III.—*"For what have I done unto thee?"*

- (a) Merely a mantle. The words invite reflection on the significance of the act. Not merely had the mantle of Elijah and the voice of Jesus Christ made a crisis; the crisis reminds us of what every crisis is: the issue of a divine preparation for new responsibility whether in rejection or acceptance. So each step in life is the outcome of the past and the entrance into the future.
- (b) This—that thou hast grace to read aright the call and to accept: that thou wilt have grace corresponding to the requirements. Apply the thoughts of this meditation to the secrets of the devout life, its history of correspondence to prayer, its life of sacramental communion. The mantle is the veil which hides while it conveys the guiding direction of God, whereby the vocation of each life is traced out step by step.
- (c) The words bid us think of the divinity which hedges our lives: mostly the mantle seems so ordinary; and so it is not perceived aright; they hear no voice in the daily life, they see no mantle of God in the homely garb of well-known Elijah. But to those who feel God, each day of life is a divine guidance and a call to forsake all and follow.

God Speaking

FEAST OF S. MATTHEW

"If ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."—Ps. xciv. 8, P.B.V.

Picture: the call of S. Matthew from the receipt of custom.

Resolve: to listen for God to speak in daily life.

I.—Consider God's voice heard in history.

- (a) It was heard in the days of Moses; so emphatically that later generations have regarded the Exodus as having no affinity with the ordinary events of history. They, men of that age, did not think so; they grumbled and criticized as much as we feel at liberty to do to-day. God spake; and they said that Moses was a failure.
- (b) The psalmist had read his history to some profit; he saw that men of later generations were to learn lessons from this past history, and not to say that it was "sacred" history, whereas history to-day is secular. And the psalmist did not say that past history was secular; he said that present history was sacred.
- (c) And the psalmist felt that it was a very natural thing that God should speak "to-day." It matters not devotionally whether the psalm was written by David, as very naturally the author of the epistle to the Hebrews thought (Heb. iv. 7), or whether Psalms xciii.-c. are a group of post-exilic psalms, when the people had been brought out of Babylon as their fathers had been brought out of Egypt.

II.—God's voice in daily life.

- (a) Matthew was one whose secular occupation did not help him to hear God's voice, or to expect that God would speak. God did speak, however, and in a way which easily could have been not heard. It only required that Matthew should have been letting his heart get hardened by the routine of business, and then he would not have heard God's voice in the quiet invitation of the Rabbi.
- (b) God's voice was heard in the raising of the widow's son (S. Luke vii. 12). Was it coincidence or divine pre-determination, which brought him face to face with the little funeral? Reflect that chance or coincidence, when used, is hearing God's voice. What was the widow's reflection? A fortunate thing, or divine providence?
- (c) There are some to-day who are specially ready to think that Almighty God interferes with the course of events in their behalf. We are apt to be offended at them, because they are sometimes self-righteous, and think that God does on their behalf what he would not do for others. But they are not so wrong as we who laugh at the idea of God speaking; they are merely mistaken in thinking that God only speaks rarely, or out of a peculiar favour to themselves.

III.—God speaks.

- (a) Jesus Christ draws near very frequently in the natural coincidences of life, not merely in crises, and in special acts of providence. Then God shouts. But if we do not harden the heart, we may hear his voice continually when we turn to the right hand or to the left. Many Christians know quite well when he will not let us speak in Asia or go to Bithynia (Acts xvi. 6 ff.).
- (b) Consider some such drawings near to speak. In the true temper and fellowship of Christians (S. Luke xxiv. 15); in opportunity promptly seized as in the call of Matthew; or when he comes to us in the person of the poor, the distressed, and the insignificant (S. Matt. xxv. 40).
- (c) Readiness to hear is encouraged by promptness of obedience in little things. Inattention is near akin to deafness. Many Christians regularly take their small perplexities to God, and with special intention lay them on the altar. They are quite right in knowing that he speaks. Those are wrong who think that he does not speak other than in cataclysms of nature or personal experience.

The Angels

FEAST OF S. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

"An innumerable company of angels."—Heb. xii. 22.

Picture: the Christian society as depicted in these verses.

Resolve: to consider more often the holy angels as a stimulus to worship and warfare.

I.—Consider the existence of angels.

- (a) A matter of revelation; human reason cannot assert more than the reasonable probability of their existence. The modern mind has not much sympathy with them, and would like to put them away as a part of Jewish tradition or superstition. We, without any temptation to do this, may consider whether we should be conscious of any loss if we found that there were no angels. Reflect, too, that we cannot know in what ways and to what extent we are unconsciously helped by them.
- (b) It is not unreasonable that since God has created us for his glory, he should also have created other rational beings for his glory; and that since we are a sphere of his delight there should also be other spheres of his delight. Nor is it unreasonable that these spheres should have relationship, that angels should minister to us, and that we should be an absorbing interest to them.
- (c) After the exile the Jews largely developed their ideas about the angels in an attempt to fill up the great distance between God and themselves, of which they became more conscious in those later times. The Christian revelation of the union of God with man in Jesus Christ more than bridges this consciousness of distance; but where this fellowship is not realized angelic or even human friendship may be misinterpreted, and the fulness of our fellowship be abused as a compensation for fellowship with God.

II.—Consider the boldness and the balance of truth.

- (a) God seems to be indifferent to the danger of abuse, men more often indifferent to the dangers of neglect. The consideration of the saints and of holy Mary illustrates this. Even to-day a Christian is subjected to suspicion, who does not ignore the innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect.
- (b) Our Lord did not so ignore the angels: he spoke of them in his teaching apparently without reserve, in spite of the Jewish exaggeration of angelology. He has presented them as ministering for God on behalf of men, as inhabitants of heaven; he has spoken of the children's angels, and of a service of angels to himself.
- (c) S. Paul has corrected a false system of thought in Colossæ, which obscured the fulness of the Incarnation, but even to that local church he did not write disparagingly of the angels. The Revelation of S. John has naturally the fullest treatment of angels, and this is the book which contains the most direct command not to worship them (xxii. 8, 9). The epistle to the Hebrews stands in this matter somewhat nearer to Colossians than to the Apocalypse, but it contains the words of our meditation.

III.—Some considerations on the angels.

- (a) If it has pleased God to minister spiritually to man through men, it should not surprise us if he do also through angels (see Heb. i. 14). The less should it surprise us, when we consider that we are members of that fellowship in which they act as God's bodyguard. That it has pleased him to reveal to us their ministry, when they might have ministered to us without our knowledge, is a sign that it is profitable for us to consider them.
- (b) This revelation may be viewed in some degree as a gracious condescension to our frailty. We would often be wise above God, soaring into the purely spiritual, as we conceive it, when he knows better our constitution. In neglecting the ministry of angels we are much more liable to be swayed by our materialism which cannot grasp the spiritual than by a faith so exalted that it pierces straight through into the very presence chamber of God.
- (c) The consideration of the angels is to elevate our worship, by appreciation of their reverence and by the aid of their fellowship in our worship. It is to encourage us also in our Christian warfare by the remembrance of their aid, who themselves have fought against the spiritual enemies who attack us, and have won through the grace of God.

Worshippers, Witnesses, Ministers

FEAST OF S. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

"For they are equal unto the angels."—S. Luke xx, 36.

Picture: the angels as our examples, and the Eucharistic life as preparing us to be like unto them.

Resolve: to consider the angels more frequently as an incentive to faithfulness.

I.—*Worshippers.*

- (a) In heaven they always worship him; round the altar too. In this aspect of angelic occupation the communicant has his closest fellowship with them; for a moment of time they meet side by side in the kingdom of heaven. Consider too that they run no risk of worshipping the incarnate Son as a creature, or apart from the Father: they worshipped him before his incarnation in the mystery of the Holy Trinity.
- (b) When God brought the First-begotten into the world, he said, "Let all the angels of God worship him." It was their great act of public confession in the incarnate Son. Consider the Holy Communion as our great act of public confession as Christians. Many have respect for the idea of God, many believe vaguely in prayer; but to bow the knee intelligently before the Blessed Sacrament, to be an habitual communicant, this is to make public confession.
- (c) They perceive the value of the precious Blood, who have witnessed from the divine side the history of redemption, and who as ministering spirits have seen its efficacy. Hence the fire that burns within them when they worship at the altar. Shall we worship less fervently, who know that be we what we be, yet if the precious Blood be upon us, the destroying angel must pass over us?

II.—*Witnesses.*

- (a) The angels are witnesses of great mysteries to us, especially of the reality of the spirit world, and as such they witness to us of our preparation for our future life with which this is one. Thus let them teach us the worship due to the incarnate Son, that we despise not the sacrament of his presence in a materialistic mind, which would be wise above God who has thus provided for our present needs and capacities of worship.
- (b) And consider what they see. The divine glory and unapproachable mystery of his nature: the divine wrath and unquenchable love: the flinging open of heaven's gates to welcome the ascended King: the mysteries of grace at the altar and in the hearts of those to whom they minister.
- (c) So, too, do we doubly witness, we see and we testify. We see "God with us"; the mystery, which philosophy cannot solve, is held in the hand and heart of the communicant; we see the Passion renewed in the self-effacement of the altar. And strengthened by the Bread of life the Christian testifies through his life; predestined "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29).

III.—*Ministers.*

- (a) The angels are ministers to God, round his throne, round his altar. A worshipper is a minister: he not merely looks on; he shares. The Christian not only beholds and is moved; he ministers with a self-oblation which in will withholds nothing from God. To attend the celebration of the mysteries is thus to minister at the altar in things pertaining to God, to wait upon him in spirit and in truth.
- (b) "This our sacrifice." Not immolating Christ again, but in Christ his Body the Church is offering to the Father that which he has offered in order that we may do so. The Christian cannot separate the offering of Christ to the Father from the offering of himself in him.
- (c) The angels minister also to us, involving much sacrifice. The inner Christian life is full of many sacrifices, only visible to us, even as possibilities, through the grace of the Eucharistic sacrifice which is also a sacrament. The Christian ministers to others, in fellowship with the angels, in the strength of the life-giving sacrifice.

Worship and Service

FEAST OF S. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

"*Worship God.*"—Apoc. xxii. 9.

Picture: S. John at the feet of the angel.

Resolve: to learn from the angels.

I.—*The act and the emotion of worship.*

- (a) With us poor Christians worship is often a great effort. It comes to us with a sense of foreignness, and, unless the will be strongly bent to the task, it is not worship but respectful attendance upon worship that we give. The movement towards worship lags behind the sense of its duty. Some even justify themselves in only worshipping when inclined to do so, and their worship is but the satisfaction of their own desires.
- (b) We are only very elementary disciples, and worship is far above us, while still we are so inclined to the worship of self, which is idolatry, or to creature worship. Even S. John was reproved for so high a form of it, when he fell down at the angel's feet and worshipped. "See thou do it not," is the jealousy of the angels for God's prerogative.
- (c) Let the angels teach us, for they exhibit the highest form of worship. All elements of worship combine in them. They are intelligent beings who worship freely; they are active workers full of service; they delight in their unceasing worship, and find therein the proper expression of their light-heartedness and joy. Their whole existence is praise.

II.—*The angelic fervour of worship.*

- (a) There is no life so careless as the one which trusts entirely in God. Nothing drags down Christians from the height of worship as does the worry of anxiety and self-centredness. The angels are free from themselves, because their whole life is fixed on God, and they can grasp the reality of his grace which sustains them.
- (b) They worship freely, not because they are impelled thereto. The highest service is the devotion of freedom. In their lives is nothing of that painful divergence which we experience between duty and inclination as the result of the strain of high aspiration. The angels in their sinlessness see God, and to see him is to worship him.
- (c) But the angels are creatures, sustained by grace. There are fallen angels, and the spiritual creatures who fill heaven know to whom they owe it that their life is full of bliss. Is it any wonder if they love to worship God with all their being?

III.—*Worship and service.*

- (a) The angels are always busy with the will of God, that occupation which brings light-heartedness and life's music into one's existence. To them creation is a delight, because it is the manifestation of God's character and will; they joy in ministering to the fulfilment of his purpose. And now theirs is the joy of seeing the sons of men, to whom they minister, learn to know God, and to praise him for what he is.
- (b) And they are always doing his will. It is an error to divide angels into those who worship and those who minister. They always worship; they always serve. In the perfection of life the two become one. They lay down their crowns before the throne in the accomplishment of their tasks of obedient service. We shall do this more perfectly some day than now, if we think a great deal more of worship, and learn to delight to do his will in order that we may worship him better.
- (c) At present we have to think of the two separately for ourselves, because we are so little proficient that we must study each aspect of life by itself. But we shall worship better if we learn to adore the will of God in all things; and we shall do his will the better if we give greater heed to worship both in its simple form of praise, and also in its higher form of adoration.

The Holy Guardian Angels

FEAST OF S. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

"For he shall give his angels charge over thee."—Ps. xci. 11.

Picture: the warfare of the angels.

Resolve: to pray in each decision that you may be in the way of God.

I.—*Divine guardianship.*

- (a) A psalm of God's providence. It is S. Paul's, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" written in poetry. No wonder that it is a Compline psalm. We may safely refer it to later Jewish history, when the insecurity of the nation's peace led the faithful to appreciate more deeply the personal providence of the Almighty.
- (b) The words have a unique application. S. Thomas has said that Satan showed his ignorance even more than his craft, since he did not need guardian angels who is himself their strength and stay, and who in his mortal condition was supported by the union of the eternal Wisdom with his human nature.
- (c) Nevertheless the incarnate life was thus surrounded by the angelic guard of honour; and to him we must look as the ultimate authority for the place of angels in the minds of the first Christians. His references to them are not prominently utilitarian; for guardianship he turns us directly to the Father, not resting in those who but fulfil his behests as ministering servants. In his mouth the angels are rather a natural part of the spiritual kingdom in its fulness and glory.

II.—*The guardian angels.*

- (a) A large part of the ministry which is assigned to the holy angels will come under the term guardianship. In worshipping the Father, apart from whom not even a sparrow falls to the ground, we are invited to pay heed to his servants. If we should not be indifferent to the service of men, who are in this only the servants of God, neither should we be regardless of those spiritual hosts whose ministry he has revealed.
- (b) Their office towards the heirs of salvation is harmonious with the system of the divine working. The Almighty acts mediately; and, seeing that creation is his handiwork, it is difficult to think that he should normally do otherwise. In sacraments he has made the material creation the actual means of the conveyance of his highest grace; so, too, he communicates with us through the Church and through human life; he makes the saints on high special participators on our behalf in the intercession of the Mediator, and the angels, his first creation, share both in material and spiritual providence. Thus he binds all creation in one chain of mutual service dependent upon himself.
- (c) Consider, too, that all things are ordered one against another. Spiritual foes and spiritual helpers: the first creation carries on the warfare in its own region which was begun by the fall of the angels. What could not Satan and his hosts accomplish against us if they were not opposed by those whom God has charged with his warfare!

III.—*Their charge.*

- (a) Consider therefore this warfare. We watch the history of a human life, and think it a weak thing; but behind this is a spiritual struggle of which we make little or no reckoning. It should reveal to us the enormity of the issue.
- (b) The angels have only limited power, for they are creatures; but the good angels have more power than the evil ones, for they have unity, singleness of purpose, the power of truth and love; and behind all this they have the grace of God.
- (c) The guardianship of the holy angels lies in the sphere of God's ways. S. Bernard remarks that Satan's application was not a way but ruin. In the way of obedience—not even of presumption—is the way in which the holy angels have charge over us.

Angels and Men Worshipping God

FEAST OF S. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

"And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks."—S. Luke xvii. 16.
"Let all the angels of God worship him."—Heb. i. 6.

Picture: The angels and God's ransomed people worshipping.

Resolve: to pay more attention to the worship of adoration, and to follow the holy angels therein.

I.—*There is difference between the worship of men and of angels.*

- (a) Man comes now to worship God as a stranger. He has become a stranger through alienation: God did not at the first make men Samaritans; they are become intruders in the land by the mixture of foreign ingredients in their constitution.
- (b) But now he has to "turn back" to worship God. How hopeless a prospect were it not that the Saviour of mankind, having taken upon him our nature, passes through the midst of Samaria and enters our village, so that now we can meet him. But the holy angels of God have never made themselves strangers from him; they need no turning back.
- (c) He has had to be healed before he can worship him aright. This makes the great contrast between the angelic worship and our own. We might almost think that the angels lose something in not thus worshipping him: but consider what it must be always to have worshipped him in spirit and in truth.

II.—*There is also parallelism between the worships.*

- (a) Both are overcome by his greatness (1 Chron. xxix. 11). The expression of this is reverence. The reverence of the angels is amply revealed, whether in Isaiah's vision, or in S. John's. Theirs is the greater reverence from beholding him not through a veil. Ours is the reverence which is to be a preparation for thus beholding him.
- (b) Both must hide self if they would worship him. Pride caused the fall of the angels: by humility the good angels stand: they are like ourselves the creatures of God. Thus Michael dared not act in independence of the divine supremacy (Jude 9). "In the secret place of the most high" (Ps. xci. 1) both they and we may be hidden from the assertion of self.
- (c) Both glorify God giving him thanks. Even the angels stand in their perfection by the grace of God, for which they give him thanks. And because they see God in his worthiness they shrink from receiving that which is due fitly to him (Apoc. xxii. 8-9). May we ever thus ascribe all the glory to God!

III.—*Angels and men meet by different ways in the worship of the Son.*

- (a) They worship the Son through the Father, for the worship of God is the worship of the blessed Trinity. While we worship the Father through the Son incarnate, they worship the Son incarnate through their worship of the blessed Trinity. While they see him as he is, in such wise as we only apprehend through the vision of Transfiguration, we see him by faith, and approach to the worship of him as he is through apprehending his brotherhood with us.
- (b) They gaze for ever on the beauty of his holiness: but we only approach towards the sight of his holiness through the cleansing from sin. But by grace we draw nearer to their sight. "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself."
- (c) They love him for what he is, and as the beloved Son who has retrieved the Father's honour. If the angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, what glory will they ascribe to the Son when he gives the kingdom over to God, that he may be all in all! We love him primarily for what he is to ourselves, the Saviour who cleanses us from our leprosy. In him we are being taught to know him as he is.

Angels and the Will of God

FEAST OF S. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

"Their angels do always behold the face of my Father, which is in heaven."
S. Matt. xviii. 10.

Picture: the angels who do his will.

Resolve: some amendment of life.

I.—*"Their angels."*

- (a) It matters not whether they be literally little children, or whether they be what S. Paul would call the weak, or whether they be the single-minded, the transparently and trenchantly christian who are the saints of God on earth. The point is that by lack of love, by roughness of unchastened life, one may cause such to stumble.
- (b) And in doing so we are reminded of their angels. It is so easy to despise—and so horribly unchristian. And Almighty God says that it is not they whom you despise, but himself, in whose image they are. Their angels do always behold the face of the Father, and in their devoted countenances he sees the reflection of the least injury which has been done to their charges.
- (c) And if this was not enough, the incarnate Word has said that to despise them is to reject him, to receive them is to receive him. One simply cannot have Christ for one's self in selfish isolation; for one has him not, unless one has him in those who are his.

II.—*The millstone.*

- (a) We have a comfortable way of getting rid of the stern words of the Gospel. We are satisfied to keep the millstone to throw at those blackguards who deliberately lead young children into sin, trading upon their simplicity. But the Gospel does not make any such reservation. It applies the words to all who do not receive as brothers those simple-hearted ones in the kingdom of heaven whose angels' faces are ever looking up into the face of God.
- (b) And the hand and foot and eye. Are they to be treated with similar comfortableness? What of the offence in me which causes one thus to stumble who should be received and encouraged by me? The selfishness, the love of the world, the hard heart, the pride, the envy, which choke the love of God that ought to be moving in me and going out from me to those whom he loves?
- (c) It is a glimpse at the fearful greatness of love. We turn love into a sentimental emotion, an amiable weakness of God and man. It is the greatest power that exists, and consequently the most awful. To neglect it, to despise it, to trample it under foot is hell. To have it, to use it, is worth any amount of mortification.

III.—*"There was war in heaven."*

- (a) It is the festival of the holy angels which reads us this terrible lesson of love. It is the same festival which tells us of the war in heaven, the resistance of divine love. All the greatest wars are in heaven; in rebellion against God's will when we will not worship it in obedience, in rebellion against his love, which is his will.
- (b) And the end of such warfare is with Michael or with the dragon. There is no place found in heaven for the will which casts out the will of God, which is love. And the only prayer of the Christian is "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," to make the kingdom of this world the kingdom of God and his Christ, to live the prayer "Thy kingdom come."
- (c) Reflect therefore on the holy angels. They are not the fairy tales of children. They are the creation of God who love him perfectly, without distraction, and who adore his will, and see in his creation the objects of his love, and in his will in creation their own sphere of love, and the way of loving him. And it is said of Christians that in the days to come, when they no longer have material bodies, they will be like the angels. To learn the will of God, to fear it, and to do it, this is angel-service.

The Trial and Confirmation of Angels

FEAST OF S. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

"All things were created by him and for him."—Col. i. 16.

Consider: the holy angels as created beings.

Pray: that you may be like unto them.

I.—*Their creation.*

- (a) They are a creation of God prior to the world of man. S. Paul had need when writing to the Colossians to dwell upon them as created through the Word, and sustained in him, and unto him as the goal; for the Colossians were deficient in their Christology, because they did not realize the supremacy of the divine Word.
- (b) They were created that they might share the divine love and glory. It is a true mark of love to desire that others should share its happiness. It is a true mark of creation that it has a purpose and a unity. It is a mark of true greatness that it is not jealous. The angels help us to understand God and his purpose, if we will consider them.
- (c) We, too, should actively co-operate with this purpose of God, by showing forth in ourselves the love which he has manifested in creation. We, too, should consider that the greatness of man is a revelation of the character of God.

II.—*Their trial.*

- (a) Into the life and history of the angelic race we can only enter dimly and by revelation. Like all rational creation the angels have had their age of probation. It is God alone who cannot sin. The response of life is the purpose of rationality, and sin is the not making response. Trial or probation is the opportunity of fixing the will upon God.
- (b) But it is only very hazily revealed how some angels fell. We need not be surprised, if we know our own hearts, that their fall came through pride (see 2 Pet. ii. 10 f.: Jude 8, ff.). Pride is the most spiritual sin. Spiritual pride, intellectual pride, pride of power, and the like, may assail those to whom the lusts of the flesh offer few temptations; and is quite possible with any amount of self-control of temper, and with a great deal of generosity and piety.
- (c) Their sin of pride has been associated by S. Bonaventura with the contemplation of their own perfection. In the pride of self-satisfaction they worshipped themselves. It is a temptation to which one might suppose that man could not be prone; but the history of the spiritual life proves that it is not rare. S. Thomas connects with the pride of rank; they fell in rebellion against the revelation of the incarnation.

III.—*Their confirmation in grace.*

- (a) Take courage from the contemplation of the holy angels, who stood their trial and are now confirmed in grace. With us, too, the time of probation is limited; very short, truly, in comparison with what lies before us.
- (b) They stood firm in the presence of God; and now they live for ever in his presence. With them every road which they take is within the limit of his will, and leads from him to him. We are confused because our intentions are not pure. There is great freedom to be experienced in keeping within the will of God.
- (c) Consider their abiding happiness, because they are always occupied with God's will. Their will is never crossed or thwarted, because they always will his will the moment that it is revealed to them. So, too, they are happy, although they are limited in knowledge and in power. It is not independence which makes happiness, but harmony with the will of God.

Angels and the Service of God

FEAST OF S. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

"His servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face."—Rev. xxii. 3, 4.

Picture: the angels, as representing to us the ideal of the divine service.

Resolve: to imitate the holy angels.

I.—*On the consideration of the angels.*

- (a) It is a protest against materialism. It reminds us that there is a sphere of existence more alive, more real, than this tangible and visible existence, which ever presses on us as a temptation or a cause of depression.
- (b) It is a reminder to us, by our fellowship with the angels, and their care for us, that we are already in the vestibule of the heavenly courts, having been translated into the kingdom of God. The angels, our fellow-servants (Rev. xxii. 9), help to people this spiritual world to us.
- (c) It is a prospective view of our perfected service when we shall be "as the angels" (S. Mark xii. 25). In heaven we shall serve him faithfully, even as the angels always do his pleasure (Ps. ciii. 21), and we shall see his face, even as they always behold the face of God (S. Matt. xviii. 10). From their fuller service let us learn some of its lessons. So may they succour us on earth!

II.—*The service of angels.*

- (a) Worship is their primary work. This includes the whole attitude of the soul towards God. It is difficult for us to see what other work there will be before us, when we behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled countenance; so that we may see a preparation for future service in our present life of worship. But we know too little of the unseen to be able to say what service may be in store for us; but the angels worship him even when sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation.
- (b) Dependence. The angels fell through independence: the angels who fell not live by dependence on God. Nor would they have it otherwise, even if it were possible. Their zeal for us issues out of the throne, from the vision of the Son of Man in glory. They fall down before the throne in a self-emptiness which is the fulness of service.
- (c) Service. It is an aspect of worship. There is variety of service in the ninefold orders, yet no jealousy, for they all are filled with the glory of God. They are ministering spirits sent forth (Heb. i. 14).

III.—*Conditions of service.*

- (a) Able to do his pleasure, because first of all they are his slaves (servants, Rev. xxii. 9). He who would serve God must first submit to him. There is no such thing as voluntary work or proffered help.
- (b) Then, if God will, his servant may be sent on service. An angel is a messenger; he is not a self-constituted agent. He who does God's will for God's glory alone, must be ready to go on or stop, to take up or to lay down, to rule or to serve, to continue or to change, without hesitation. He who is permitted to work receives a favour, and confers none.
- (c) To see his face. The angels go forth from his presence, and return to his presence, attentive to hearken to the voice of his word. They are always turned godwards. If ever an angel could be so engrossed in his work that he should not see God by reason of the work, he would fall from his high estate. It is only by conformity to the will of God that we can see his face. "Seek ye my face: thy face, Lord, will I seek."

The Service of Men

FEAST OF S. LUKE

"Enriched by him."—1 Cor. i. 5.

Consider: the system of hospitals, medical service, and nurses.

Pray: for those who thus minister to us and to our brethren.

I.—*"Judge not."*

- (a) There is a certain spirit of clericalism which is the bane of the clergy. It alienates them from the laymen; it narrows their sympathy, and makes them uncharitable in their judgments. It is not sufficient to think that the fault lies in others, because they are not christian in their way of thought; it lies in our own professionalism. To some extent the clergy cannot escape from it; but at the least it should make them very charitable towards other people's professionalism.
- (b) The medical profession suffers from the same spirit. If the clergy are too narrowly theological in their thought, the medical men are too exclusively materialistic in their training. It is not their fault but their duty, to have made a special and close study of those branches of science which nevertheless react upon the mind with a certain narrowing of their outlook upon life. It is not for the clergy to judge them harshly.
- (c) It is truer to form one's estimate from their lives than from their opinions. Is there any sphere of public ministry which produces such an amount of public-spirited service, high devotion to duty, such innumerable acts of mercy and kindness without hope of reward? Are these of no account? Ought we not to give God very hearty thanks for our doctors?

II.—*The service of man.*

- (a) On the festival of S. Luke one thinks of the whole ministry of the body. It is the Church which first taught the true ministry of women,—and which has always been discovering new forms of service. In these days the service of women is enriched by manifold occupations; and especially one thinks of the nurse.
- (b) Have I never been under obligation to doctor and to nurse? In many cases the ministry of help has saved even life. There lies upon most of us a very heavy debt to be repaid: how has it been recognized in prayer for doctor, medical student, hospital, and nurse? What care has been taken to show courtesy and kindness, sympathy and intelligent care for such?
- (c) Consider that the skill and knowledge which combine to relieve mankind are in a very high degree sacred. One must not think of the professions of medicine and nursing as secular avocations. The skilled knowledge of the human frame, the application of medicines to its diseases, the tender touch, and the unwearying patience are truly part of the enrichment of life in Christ.

III.—*Modern aspects of life.*

- (a) In some ways life tends to become more grey as it becomes more complex. How many must minister in dull and monotonous service, specialized in detail, or ugly in character! Consider what compensation it is that in these days there is the relief to life of skilled medical service and of gentle nurses, alleviating the grimness, and humanizing its routine. It is part of Christ's enrichment.
- (b) The world advances in material knowledge, in the invention of luxury, in the discovery of new forms of comfort and indulgence. But the same restlessness of man to investigate, to find out, to invent, has contributed also to his relief, and to his physical betterment. We are enriched in him.
- (c) Social growth, and the general conditions of life, have set women free to earn their livings, and to employ their lives, and have also put the necessity upon them. Think what this would mean if at the same time they had not found the service of ministering to the sick! Social life is enriched in Christ.

The Friend of S. Paul

FEAST OF S. LUKE

"Friend, go up higher."—S. Luke xiv. 10.

Consider: S. Luke, obscured by his self-suppression, exalted to the rank of evangelist.

Pray: for the spirit to be hidden in life from the eyes of man, but known to God.

I.—*"Friend."*

- (a) It is the act of a friend to be unobtrusive, to seek to give no trouble to his host, but secretly to aid him. He desired only to see the host filling his post with dignity, while he minded nothing if the other guests despised him and pushed before him.
- (b) The host valued his friendship and singled him out for attention: he, at least, did not misinterpret his humility. Friends understand one another. Moreover, humility is a grace which can be safely rewarded: it never thinks that it has deserved its reward.
- (c) The patriarch Abraham is distinguished by the title "My friend" (Is. xli. 8). Such distinction carries with it what is involved in friendship; he always trusted God, and God delighted continually to call him to go up higher. There was no fear that Abraham would claim his reward (Gen. xv. 1), as the debt whereof he had to glory (Rom. iv. 2-4). So, too, our Lord said to his disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends." It is to the humble that he giveth grace to know the things of his Father, for the humble have the mind of Christ.

II.—*S. Luke has the marks of a friend.*

- (a) In his relation to S. Paul. He made himself his servant for the gospel's sake, ministering to him on his long voyage to Rome (perhaps travelling as his slave), waiting on him in prison. Thus while he sought it not, he was called to go up higher; his praise was in the Church (2 Cor. viii. 18). How different from Diotrophes, who loved pre-eminence, and so would not receive S. John's wishes (3 S. John 9).
- (b) In his writings. The unobtrusiveness of friendship is seen in his history of S. Paul's missions. He is only to be detected by the change from "they" to "we." His gospel shows how much he entered into the mind of the apostle of the Gentiles, and how deeply he understood the revelation of the Saviour of the world. Verily, he who did not his righteousness before men, to be seen of them, was rewarded in himself by him that seeth in secret.
- (c) But he who thus silently enjoyed the friendship of S. Paul, and stored his mind with memorials of their common Friend, has been called to go up higher. He ranks with the evangelists, and has his anonymous honour as the first historian of the Church. This is not a posthumous reward: S. Luke still lives.

III.—*S. Luke—"Go up higher."*

- (a) The evangelist instructs us in the sanctification of natural endowment. He is the beloved physician (Col. iv. 14). His spirit of humility lies at the base of all that scientific progress which has been rewarded in the magnificent attainments of the healing art. Friendship—sympathy with one's study, in reverence and humility—is the spirit which is rewarded in medical science. Medical missions, Guild of S. Luke, etc., are parts of the exaltation of the evangelist.
- (b) The sanctification of service. He sought to make no sphere of his own: Philippi, where he was left by S. Paul, has this proudest mark of his service, that it was the most loyal hearted and devoted of the churches to S. Paul. Most work is ruined by individualism.
- (c) The exaltation of literature. With great natural qualifications for his task of writing history he combined the higher gifts of a modesty which can hide self—he has recorded no incident of his own ministry,—and a spiritual sympathy with his subject such as has led his gospel to survive where many attempts have failed. Christian literature is one part of the exaltation of S. Luke.

Full Proof of Ministry

FEAST OF S. LUKE

"Make full proof of thy ministry."—2 Tim. iv. 5.

Consider: S. Paul's lifelong interpretation of these words.

Resolve: some personal application.

I.—*The demand.*

- (a) Jesus Christ demands of us life at its highest, the intense application of all gifts and attainments. The unjust steward was dismissed for wasting his master's goods, and we are bidden to learn from the children of this world. The servant who kept his master's pound unused, without risking the venture of gain, found him austere.
- (b) S. Paul set before himself and before others a standard of exertion and perfection which could not tolerate inefficiency or discouragement. Amazed at his undying exertions, overwhelmed by the loftiness of his spiritual lessons, we have perhaps not sufficiently realized the soundness of his judgment, the intellectual strength of his policy, how continuously he gave of his best, and demanded the same of others.
- (c) John Mark did not at first satisfy his sense of the standard required for ministry: Titus was chosen as a man of promise, and entrusted with a mission to Corinth so delicate that only its success justified his selection. Timothy and Luke were not spared danger or exertion. The pastoral epistles represent S. Paul's lofty standard of service, and do not reflect upon the weakness of Timothy's character as some suppose. S. Paul was not one to choose inefficient workmen for difficult posts, because they were devout.

II.—*Consider S. Luke.*

- (a) He was a man after S. Paul's own heart, efficient at all points. His writings show him to be one who heartily appreciated the sound governing principle upon which S. Paul did his missionary work; the attachment of the Greek doctor to the Cilician pharisee was a union of two large-hearted men, whose heads worked together with their hearts.
- (b) S. Luke neither regarded his efficiency as an excuse from the common toil and self-suppression of his missionary life, nor did his arduous labours sink him into intellectual atrophy, nor yet did he relegate the devout life to those who were less busy or less capable than himself. Efficiency characterized the whole man.
- (c) In studying S. Luke's writings, think of the unconscious revelation of the author, and appreciate how high a standard of work he has set before the Church. Consider especially his gospel; that he has taken pains over it was only to be expected of him, but reflect rather upon its manifestation of the humble and sincere Christian who has bowed his heart to the Son of Man, and left for all ages the mission gospel of conversion, the gospel of childhood, of women, of sinners, of prayer, and of human love and pity.

III.—*Some applications.*

- (a) The use of all gifts at their highest. There is a tendency to exaggerate and to misapply the limited qualifications of the early Christians: "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble," has been turned into a commonplace tolerance of slack and insipid Christianity.
- (b) There is an imperious demand upon each one to be one man throughout, and that the best man of which God has made him capable. Religion is not the specialized development of the emotions. Take warning from the "wicked servant," who kept his master's pound wrapt up in a napkin. Strength is the characteristic of Christianity, not negativeness.
- (c) If S. Luke has shown us how the pound may gain ten pounds, we must learn aright from him the lesson of strenuousness and the application of all the powers. Energy does not atone for self-will, nor capacity for conceit, and neither for the neglect to follow the example of Jesus Christ in all things. Such onesidedness is no more Christian than the popular perversion which would represent religion as saying one's prayers and trying to be good.

On the Foundation of the Apostles

FEAST OF SS. SIMON AND JUDE

"Built upon the foundation of the apostles."—Eph. ii. 20.

"Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."—S. John i. 17.

Consider: the observance of the feast of an apostle.

Resolve: to observe more faithfully the festivals of apostles.

I.—*The apostles.*

- (a) It is one of the differences between the public services of the Church and those of Protestant Nonconformists that the latter give no official place to the apostles. It is a significant omission. Church and chapel differ not in form of service, which is immaterial; they differ in their fundamental conception of Christianity.
- (b) To those outside the Church the apostles are only the first Christians; good men differing from us mainly because they happen to be named in the New Testament. But to Churchmen they have a rank whereby they enter inherently and intimately into the Church's life and worship. They are not only the personal disciples of Jesus; they are the princes of the Church.
- (c) And yet they were not all great men in themselves. Of the twelve perhaps one became a great man; S. Paul was not one of the original apostles, and S. Luke has never been reckoned as an apostle. Nor are they exalted because they were pre-eminent missionaries. About most of them we know nothing as certain; they are not associated in the calendar with any country as owing its conversion to them.

II.—*Truth.*

- (a) Consider why the apostles are separately commemorated, or in pairs—testifying silently to the fact that it is the company, the body, the rank, rather than the individual which is prominent. We have monthly festivals of the apostles, and are not content to embrace them under the great festival of All Saints. The reason lies in the very nature of Church life.
- (b) The Church is a living organism carrying down a living tradition of the faith, received from the past and handed on to the succeeding generation. The truth is not a discovery made by us from reading the Bible; it is a revelation given to the apostles; and they are the foundations of the Christian tradition (Acts i. 2; 1 Cor. xv. 3, 8). The apostolic doctrine is that which the Church guards.
- (c) In the early Church, when the interpretation of the doctrine became complex, the reply given was not "we think," "it seems to me from holy Scripture," but a bold assertion of the descent of apostolic tradition. "This truth I received from the bishop who was before me, and he received it." The one fatal argument was that a doctrine was new. The festivals of the apostles are fundamental assertions of the essential principle of revelation.

III.—*Grace.*

- (a) The second great reason why the apostles are the foundation of the Church is that they hold just the same relation to grace as they do to truth. As truth was revealed and is handed down in creed, and catechism and instruction, so grace was received and is handed down by laying on of hands in apostolical succession.
- (b) The first apostles received the dispensation of grace. To them was first committed the authority to administer the sacraments and to ordain elders. They are the first bishops, because they were the apostles of Jesus Christ. This law of the transmission of grace is an essential feature of the Church's oneness.
- (c) And so the festivals of the apostles link us to Jesus Christ, from whom comes grace and truth. These apostles first received and then handed down. No wonder that we should observe their festivals through whom we have the truth as it is in Jesus, and the grace of sacraments whereby we are members of his Body.

Disciples and Apostles

FEAST OF SS. SIMON AND JUDE

"*Learn of me.*"—S. Matt. xi. 29. "*He sent them.*"—S. Luke ix. 2.

Picture: one of the twelve as disciple and as apostle.

Pray: for development in discipleship.

I.—"*Learned Christ*" (Eph. iv. 20).

- (a) Early Christianity had many faults; moral difficulties, materialistic conceptions, unbalanced mind. Consider 1 Tim. from this point of view, and do not faithlessly croak over our own evil days. But one feature is very certain in the first days; the Christians had an intensely close relationship to our Lord.
- (b) The word "Disciple" illuminates this. Disciple is learner. He diligently learns his ideals and principles from the Master, as against the natural law of fairness (S. Matt. v. 38-42), the limitation of forgiveness (S. Matt. xviii. 21-22), right intentions unsanctified (S. Luke ix. 54; S. Matt. xix. 13; S. Mark ix. 38), spiritual jealousy (S. Matt. xx. 24), and many other things. It is only from himself that we can learn these lessons.
- (c) The disciple is one who learns directly from our Lord's person: he is being trained by fellowship with one who is Master, by one who is felt to be immeasurably above the disciple, and whom often he does not understand (S. Luke xviii. 34); who is somewhat afraid of him (S. Mark ix. 32; x. 32), and who yet brings everything to him for explanation and solution (S. Matt. xvii. 19). Above all he lives continually in his society and fellowship (S. Luke xxii. 28; Acts i. 21).

II.—"*Have put on Christ*" (Gal. iii. 27).

- (a) Discipleship is not inconsistent with many failures. The disciple is learning, and learning means mistakes. One can know if a mistake is really all right by the way in which one treats it. Consider S. Peter's fall, or SS. Paul and Barnabas' heat about S. Mark, and their later relationship.
- (b) Watch the growth of true discipleship. Trace it in S. Peter's Epistle (see 1 Peter ii. 20-21; iii. 15, R.V.; iv. 1 and 13; v. 6, 7). See it in S. Paul's mystical union with Christ: the baptized put on Christ, and are therefore sons of God, and are therefore free (Gal.). Died with Christ, buried with him in baptism, rose and are ascended (Col.). And see the applications; "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus": "To wait for his Son from heaven."
- (c) This growth of discipleship has carried us beyond the experience of the learners under Jesus before his crucifixion. The imitation of Jesus is following in his footsteps; the mystical union is a reproduction of the life of Christ in us by his Spirit which he has bestowed upon us. Before the disciple in Galilee and Judæa lie further experiences; the disciple becomes friend (S. John xv. 14); there are greater works (S. John xiv. 12).

III.—"*As my Father hath sent me*" (S. John xx. 21).

- (a) The disciple is to be an apostle, the learner is to be one who has received a commission. Even in early days the two were combined. The twelve become apostles for the time of their commissioned journey (S. Mark vi. 7, 30). After Pentecost the personal witnesses are pre-eminently the apostles; and Barnabas and Saul are commissioned by the Church of Antioch (Acts xiii. 3; xiv. 4, 14). Epaphroditus is the apostle of the Church of Philippi to S. Paul (Phil. ii. 25, R.V. marg.).
- (b) S. Paul, because we know him so well, seems to show us a special light upon apostleship as being sent even as the Father sent his Son. Gal. iv. 19 shows us the true spirit and fellowship of one who has the commission like his, who indeed shares in his commission.
- (c) This commission sends us back to discipleship. The great Apostle (Heb. iii. 1) is the teacher to his disciples: our commission is in fellowship with him. It is very personally related to him as being a commission to make disciples in his name (S. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, R.V.), which S. Paul interprets as "learning Christ" (Eph. iv. 20).

The King of Saints

FEAST OF ALL SAINTS

"Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."—Apoc. xv. 3.

Picture: the saints as the bodyguard of the King of kings.

Resolve: Aspiration.

I.—*The King of the saints.*

- (a) Pre-eminently so, for they are his without rival, and they have a long-established devotion to his service. On earth they represented him more fully than the rest of mankind in proportion as even then they were more singly his. In their just lives they were true ambassadors of the King of righteousness, witnessing to the character of his kingdom.
- (b) And now, as his bodyguard in heaven, they share his most intimate presence, being conformed to him by grace, and wearing the image of his beloved Son by having died to sin and risen to the new life of holiness by mortification of the natural man. In them the delight of the Father in his Son finds a reflected joy.
- (c) And they, by reason of being fully redeemed by the precious Blood, have unbroken love of the King of kings, in whom they see the archetype of that heavenly character which was manifested in human speech in the Saviour in whom they have grown up in sonship unto the true understanding of the Father's mind.

II.—*Our neglect of the saints.*

- (a) Because the world thinks but little of the saints, being very sceptical of what cannot be translated into material equivalent, it has a most meagre conception of the Christian character, and of the victory of God in man. In the saints there is the vision of goodness whereby in some degree weak men can measure the holiness of God.
- (b) With the neglect of the saints has gone the realization of the purgative life after death. The holiness of Almighty God has given way to a false weak sense of his generosity; and therein both the necessity of purgatory is done away, and also the heroic Christian virtues have given place in men's minds to practical philanthropy of an easy character.
- (c) With this neglect heaven also is become less real to us. We no longer picture the bliss of the saints, the extension of that life to which even on earth they aspired, and so we philosophize about it; but our real desire is centered on an escape rather than on an attainment.

III.—*They justify the ways of God.*

- (a) In them he is glorified. The ways of God are indeed untrackable by us, but in the saints we see the justice and truth of him who is both faithful and just to forgive. In them we can look back on the chequered history of human lives and see that he hath done all things well. The Christian attainment which in us looks so paltry is noble in them, and worthy of Almighty God and his redeeming love.
- (b) They increase our faith in the power of grace. Our only knowledge of the saints individually is of those who lived or died heroically on earth; and we know that it was not external advantage which made them to be worthy, but the interior grace of God which enabled them to rise above external disadvantages. Of the saints who have lived unknown lives upon earth we can but reflect that it is in them, too, the superabundant grace of God which alone can make men heroic in the unheroic circumstances of commonplace life.
- (c) And even while on earth saintly lives are the justification of the divine ways to man. They are the symbol of heaven, the verifying of Jesus Christ in daily life, as they reproduce in some measure the life of the Son of Man. It is a sad reflection on any part of his Church if from what men see they do not believe in the saints.

The Holy Dead

NOVEMBER SECOND

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. From henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them."—Apoc. xiv. 13, R.V., Marg.

Picture: the holy dead as being illuminated through development.

Resolve: to pray regularly for the faithful departed.

I.—*"We shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is"* (1 S. John iii. 2).

- (a) One way of interpretation is that we shall be like him, for otherwise we could not see him in his ascension glory. There is a sight of the Son of Man in his glory which is for all; S. John considers a revelation for those only who have passed to a stage of sonship with which, when he wrote, he was not yet acquainted.
- (b) Another way of representing this to the mind is that only when the final attainment is reached will the sons fully know him as Saviour. The words set the mind upon the progress of life after death, and the work of grace going on there unimpeded by distraction of purpose. In the Body of Christ they still have their share in the Holy Sacrifice and their claim upon our prayers.
- (c) The unity of the Body of Christ can never be neglected without personal loss. To remember the faithful departed is to recall to one's self the imperative responsibility of life's present experience to have the hope set on him. *"In the place where the tree falleth there it shall be"* (Eccles. xi. 3). And, saving for some exceptional hurricane, and perhaps even so, the tree falleth according to the gradual bending of its life.

II.—*"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."*

- (a) More usual to think of the dead as undergoing purgation; we think, however, of them as the subjects of illumination. And here first negatively. Unlike us their eternal lot is fixed; there can be no longer any change of purpose; they are therefore "blessed," for there is no distraction, no shadow of fear, or of duplicity of purpose, to darken the illumination.
- (b) *"Yea, that they may rest from their labours."* Consider the faithful departed as delivered from the great distraction of purpose which disturbs us through the continual struggle against sin; from this arduous labour they rest through a will unswervingly fixed upon God, and therein present themselves without impediment to the illuminating fires of God's holy love.
- (c) *"For their works follow with them."* Apply these words to the consideration that actions form abiding character; in themselves the holy dead, differing much from one another, carry with them the interior fruitfulness of their lives. Even the death-bed penitent carries with him the fixing of himself upon God in the supreme struggle; the life-long ardent Christian presents a far clearer substance to the penetrating glow which illuminates him.

III.—*"Which die in the Lord."*

- (a) Fire as a symbol of the condition of the holy dead may be misapplied; nevertheless it expresses much which can only be represented to us by symbol. Consider the fire as the penetrating communication of God's holy love, burning up the dross, while it refines the pure. Be sure, that, in whatever way it works, they would not lose, even if they could, one iota of that which is the closer approach to fellowship with God.
- (b) The symbol expresses the true character of punishment. All punishment rightly borne draws one nearer to God, and the symbol may be treated so as to present to us the development of experience, the subject being progressively illuminated by the vision of God as his holiness and love penetrate him.
- (c) The holy dead are in a state of rapid progress, throughout which they are in closer union with Christ than are we. So S. Paul speaks of death as gain to those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. The "everlasting burnings" (Isa. xxxiii. 14 ff.) are the appreciated condition of this fellowship. At the last the fire will no longer consume, and the illumination will have passed into perfect union.

The Encircling Cloud

NOVEMBER THIRD

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses."—Heb. xii. 1.

Picture: the armies of the saints as the rows of spectators in a crowded amphitheatre, dense as a bank of clouds.

Resolve: to consider the saints daily during this octave.

I.—*The simile.*

- (a) An elaborate simile begun in x. 39, and completed in xii. 2. On the principle of faith Christians struggle in the arena of earthly life for the possession of their souls. Around them, tier above tier, are the saints who have gone before, typically represented by the worthies of chap. xi. Above all sits the King amid his saints.
- (b) "Witnesses" scarcely suggests to us the writer's thought. Not mere spectators, but "martyrs" (Gk.); and yet not what we call martyrs, but those who have witnessed or testified faithfully for Christ. The saints are former combatants, successful competitors on the principle of faith.
- (c) One sits supreme: he is given here his human name, for the simile regards him in relation to his earthly endurance. His earthly experience was that of faith in its highest degree, so that he is become faith's leader (not merely author or beginner) and consummator. The author insists, with an emphasis equal to S. Paul, upon the true principle of life as the penetration beyond the temporal and material into the true and abiding.

II.—*The cloud of witnesses.*

- (a) They witnessed by a life of faith: and now their presence with their Leader is an abiding testimony to us of the victorious issue. To look at them is to be filled with hope. Why do we make so little practical use of the saints, who are no idle spectators of a struggle in which they have had no part, and by competitors to whom they are indifferent? In the oneness of the Church, they are both stimulants and helpers.
- (b) Their experiences were as varied as are those of Christians to-day. It is fatally enervating to think of the saints as always sufferers by death: to rise by grace above one's surrounding temptations to a level which reflects the power of the divine life, this is the way of all saintship. In chap. xi., the life of saintship is sketched in various careers. There were those who dared in the activity of life: Noah who builded his ark, Abraham the pilgrim, who sacrificed his dearest treasure, Moses who resigned a luxurious career. What have I done?
- (c) And there were saints whose faith manifested itself in spiritual sight, seeing the invisible: Abel, whose sacrifice was the expression of an inward aspiration; Enoch, who found fellowship with God in the primitive days; those who saw promises afar off; Isaac, responding to the divine impulse; the encompassers of Jericho, who obeyed through faith. What have I ventured on faith?

III.—*The encouragement.*

- (a) The saints secure in their seats were once combatants in the arena, yet they have conquered: boys and girls, men and women, with our limitations, with similar environment. One there is to whom they looked, who proved more than conqueror in them. His power is not waxed weak.
- (b) And they encourage us by their bliss. Round about the King they are thronged as his bodyguard, and the close interest with which they watch us is prompted by brotherly yearning towards those who cannot yet realize the joy that is set before them.
- (c) In the oneness of the Church, Christ and his saints and angels are far closer to us than any human friend. As we struggle, the saints' hearts go out to us, and on our behalf they turn to the King of saints. The reverence which restrains from calling upon the saints seeing that we may call upon Christ himself, may be abused if we forget them. "Holy Mary and all the saints of God pray for me," is a good ejaculation.

Consideration of the Saints

NOVEMBER FOURTH

"These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God."—Apoc. vii. 14, 15.

Picture: "The adoration of the Lamb": the Lamb slain is on the altar; round it are adoring hosts of kings, priests, martyrs, virgins, abbots, warriors, etc.

Resolve: to glorify God in his saints.

I.—Consider the earthly lives of the saints.

- (a) Not all were martyrs; but they were all in a state of saintly grace. It is here that we mostly fail, in interior grace, not in opportunity. Many think that they would like to be martyrs, who cannot even control their temper, or forgive an injury. In will the saints are martyrs; Almighty God was dearer to them than their own lives, and they would have died rather than grieve him.
- (b) Tests of saintly grace are to be found in the beatitudes. The saints while on earth were never satisfied: but we shrink from anything that is supererogatory. In the vision of God's holiness they saw their own imperfection; in comparison with the world we think that we do very well.
- (c) They washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb: to them the precious Blood was indeed of priceless value; it was a treasured gift. How much must we need the cleansing blood, and at what price do we value it?

II.—Consider the saints in heaven.

- (a) They see God. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" is fulfilled in them. And to them it is the satisfaction of all their desires. But it is not natural to desire this; it is supernatural. Heaven is for those who aspire.
- (b) They ascribe salvation to God. This is a large part of heaven's bliss. In this we may begin by anticipation to enter into the joy of heaven, and thereby to prepare ourselves for it. Praise God for the blessings of the Christian revelation.
- (c) They have great power in helping us through God. "The prayer of a righteous man availeth much." If the prayers of one for another on earth do not come between the soul and God, neither do the prayers for us of the saints in heaven. And they are much nearer to God than even the holiest man on earth.

III.—Considerations from the saints.

- (a) To think more of heaven, as a place to be attained. To make real to ourselves the truth that heaven is our home, and that here we are strangers and pilgrims. To consider the saints frequently, as our elder brothers, and our examples, that we may not be conformed to this world by measuring ourselves one with another.
- (b) To glorify God in his saints. How selfish we are in our religion! Consider how much Almighty God is glorified in his saints, in their merits which flow entirely from the Passion of his Son, in them as the fruits of his grace, in the honour which they bring to his Church. Resolve to make more use of Saints' days, and to think of the saints on them. Study the lives of saints.
- (c) To consider how much we owe to them. What would be the tone of Christianity without the saints? What wealth of noble inheritance has the Church in these her noblest sons! They are the fulness of the Church's worship: her worship, her prayers, include those of the saints. Consider the picture of the meditation as the true picture of every celebration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Glorifying God in His Saints

NOVEMBER FIFTH

"They marvelled, and glorified God, who had given such power unto men."—S. Matt. ix. 8.

Picture: the wonderful lives of the saints illustrate the power of God. From among all nations they glorify him in their bodies and in their spirits, which are his.

Resolve: to glorify him whenever you see goodness in others.

I.—Consider the words in relation to the scene.

- (a) It was indeed marvellous. Such sights were fresh to that age; they are not less marvellous to us now. We must bring freshness of mind to the reading of the holy gospels. Meditation will help us to do this, and reverence and prayer in reading God's word. May we never cease to marvel that God forgives sins by a word: either "this man blasphemeth," or God has not ceased to do marvels.
- (b) He has given such power unto men. We apply the words somewhat differently, while remembering that it is through the Man that God has given such power unto men, whether to heal the palsy, or to forgive sins, whether to do miracles spiritual or material. The Son of Man himself hath said, that ye shall do greater works than these.
- (c) They glorified God. To him be the glory, who giveth the power. The human mind more easily rests in the visible and the near at hand: but the saints always lead us up to God as the source of their powers and ours. Let us not rest until we have ascribed the glory where it is due: every created agency is but a man under authority.

II.—Consider the words in relation to the festival.

- (a) The saints have always exhibited the spiritual marvels of God. How low would be our standard but for them! God possessed their lives, and his supernatural powers were strikingly manifested in lives of which the world was not worthy. We can but marvel.
- (b) They manifested the power of spirit over matter in the mortification of their lives. How they rebuke our slackness! Sometimes they have exemplified this in martyrdom, sometimes in miracle. We know next to nothing of the spiritualization of matter, or of the power which God can exercise through a human agency entirely united in conformity to his will.
- (c) The saints make known to us also what power a righteous man can exercise over others and with God, by influence and through prayer. Some of the saints have seemed irresistible. In them we may see that our Lord's words are not exaggerations, when, e.g. he says "Nothing shall be impossible unto you" (S. Matt. xvii. 20).

III.—The saints are the peculiar glory of God in the world.

- (a) They manifest the fulness of the Christian life. How wretched and meagre is our presentation to the world of the power of God! In us it would seem as though God could only do poor things. But the sanctity of the saints redeems the age in which they live: the apostles, the apologists, the martyrs, the doctors of the Church, the hermits, the monks, the missionaries, the lovers of the poor, of the sick, of the children.
- (b) Their universality represents the totality of the Christian revelation. Of every generation, of all nations, of every variety of character. (In Apoc. xv. 3, "King of saints" A.V. should be "King of the nations" or possibly "King of the ages." The variation is instructive.) In this too they glorify God that no one can attribute their power to national character, or the circumstances of an age.
- (c) This power is in him who partakes of our nature that we may be partakers of his (see 2 Pet. i. 4). In the saints he manifests a foreshadowing of his return when he shall come to be glorified in his saints (2 Thess. i. 10), when the bodies of the faithful shall be transformed to be like unto the body of his glory (Phil. iii. 21). Then indeed will the faithful—themselves saints—marvel and glorify God.

Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake

NOVEMBER SIXTH

"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."—S. Matt v. 10, R.V.

Picture : the triumph of the saints.

Pray : for strength of character.

I.—*They that have been persecuted.*

- (a) Persecuted for righteousness' sake.' No beatitude pronounced on persecution brought on by our own faults of temper, defects of disposition, or bigotry : or on persecution suffered for opinions, for obstinacy, or for error. Persecution in itself is not rewarded by beatitude.
- (b) Persecution is a great temptation, to spiritual pride, to apostasy. Even a little unkindness is enough to make most of us break down and cease to behave as Christians. This beatitude has nothing for us if we cannot forgive them that trespass against us (1 Cor. xiii. 3).
- (c) The blessedness is in the fruits of persecution endured : "Blessed are they that have been persecuted." The blessedness is in the discipline of character (Heb. xii. 11). The same reward is promised to the poor in spirit (S. Matt. v. 3). It is no arbitrary reward : it is the establishment of character through humble endurance, which claims nothing as its right save the pursuit of righteousness.

II.—*"For righteousness' sake."*

- (a) The saints have been marked by this genuineness of desire for righteousness. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness (S. Matt. v. 6). Hunger and thirst are pains : they are not passive sentiments. Many would like to be good, if it could be without trouble : few are bent on having the mind which was in Christ Jesus.
- (b) The saints even on earth never doubted that to be persecuted for righteousness' sake was the same as persecution for the Name of Christ (S. Matt. v. 11). They knew no righteousness but in him who is our righteousness.
- (c) And the goal is attained : they are righteous (Apoc. xix. 8). All imputed and implanted righteousness has its end in acquired and perfected righteousness. And yet still throughout eternity he is their righteousness.

*"'Twas the Saviour's righteousness,
And his Blood that made them so."*

III.—*"Theirs is the kingdom of heaven" : and from their position of attainment they teach us*

- (a) The strenuousness of the Christian life, "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 22 ; Apoc. vii. 14). If we do not aspire to be saints, let us fear lest we only endure *for a while*, and stumble when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word (S. Matt. xiii. 21).
- (b) That a real hunger and thirst after righteousness will produce in us the discipline of persecution from our enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil. The world hates us as much as we are true to God (S. John xv. 19) ; the flesh lusteth against the spirit ; and the devil seeketh to devour us (see 1 Peter v. 8, 9).
- (c) That the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy (Rom. xiv. 17). Now they know it. The joy of heaven is its righteousness, and this is its peace, and there is nothing more blessed than it. And they shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. They sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things have been added unto them. Truly the half was not told them (1 Cor. ii. 9).

*"O God, to us may grace be given
To follow in their train."*

Self-Discipline of the Saints

NOVEMBER SEVENTH

"*But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head.*"—S. Matt. vi. 17.

Consider: the self-discipline of the saints.

Resolve: to seek diligently the kingdom of God.

I.—*The saints and self-discipline.*

- (a) Those who have read the lives of some of the saints may have been shocked at their mortifications, some of which were really gruesome. Perhaps it is not we who should criticize, seeing that we cannot appreciate their intense desire for unity with God. And we are conscious that in different ages the extravagance of the saints varies. It is more profitable to learn from them than to criticize them.
- (b) A lower standard than theirs leaves us satisfied without experiencing their horror of the least consent to sin, their consciousness of evil within, their realization of the joy of divine fellowship which weaned them from the material and the temporal. How differently do we and the saints listen to such words as "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off."
- (c) But it would be a great error to suppose that the saints were not happy, or that they disapproved of cheerfulness. They knew a happiness of which we are ignorant, the higher happiness which comes to those who do not seek happiness. There is about many of us too much seeking after a happiness which is not the joy of the Lord, but the satisfaction of a natural instinct in default of any experience of supernatural joy, the joy out of sorrow.

II.—*Fasting.*

- (a) All Christians desire to abstain from sin; many Christians strive diligently to abstain from sin. Few Christians will face any genuine mortification for the sake of resisting evil, and becoming strong to withstand temptation. Very few indeed have a high and positive standard, which aims at perfection instead of at abstinence from evil.
- (b) But the eyes of the saints are fixed upon God and his holiness. To get nearer to him in spirit they will count all loss but gain; and the vision of him in the beauty of holiness shows them clearly that to fast from self is the great task. It is self even more than what we rough Christians call sin which chokes the spiritual aspiration.
- (c) To aspire leads to fasting from much which is in itself lawful. Many pleasures are lawful which may be lower than other pleasures. Am I finding the higher pleasures more attractive? Some ask, "May I enjoy this lower pleasure?" The saints ask, "Can I not strive after this higher pleasure?"

III.—*Fasting with anointed head.*

- (a) There are two standards; the lower one seeks enjoyment at all costs. Being convinced that Christians need not be gloomy, do harm indeed by being morbid, these cultivate an unrestrained enjoyment, and remain spiritually superficial. The higher standard fasts, but appears not unto men to fast. It fasts to the Father. And the head is anointed and the face washed with the precious ointment and the dew of heaven.
- (b) Men see in them the anointed head and the washed face, and do not suspect the fasting, and know nothing of the Father which seeth in secret, as they know nothing of the sorrow which is turned into joy. But the saints have found the attractions of seeking first the kingdom of God.
- (c) Many seek their own pleasure even in spiritual matters. They seek themselves in worship and prayer; their own ease, indulgence, and comfort. But the saints fast even here; they restrain themselves that they may seek God only and be found of him; they check spiritual luxury, and are not afraid of dryness. With them it is God only.

Appreciation of the Saints

NOVEMBER EIGHTH

"They made light of it." "He saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment."—S. Matt. xxii. 5, 11.

Picture: the two scenes. Contrast them with the appreciation of the saints.

Pray: for depth of character.

I.—*"They made light of it."*

- (a) These are not two parables with different lessons, but one parable with one lesson. The lesson is a warning against underestimating the gospel, and is illustrated first by the case of those who neglected it in their inappreciation, and then by the case of one who accepted, but treated the invitation so lightly that he would not trouble to prepare himself.
- (b) How commonly it is that "They made light of it" explains people's entire unconcern about the claim of God! Perhaps the deepest obligation of the present age is to show men that our religion is not silly or cowardly, nor a shirking of grave problems, but the deepest solution, the noblest facing and the bravest undertaking of all the conditions of life and thought, by which we are faced.
- (c) It is not always that such misunderstanding explains indifference; there is a flippancy of character which does not care to do other than make light of everything; there is a pettiness of mind which can never appreciate or aspire, but only desire to get; there is a hurry of life which leaves no time to realize, enter into, appreciate.

II.—*"Which had not on a wedding garment."*

- (a) We must not keep these criticisms for others or for the totally indifferent; there are many easy-going Christians, who yet treat the accepted invitation as not worth the trouble to put on a proper garment, who think it easy to be a Christian; apply also to one's self.
- (b) The wedding garment is best understood by avoiding the applications to Christ's righteousness, or justifying faith, or good works. Confine the thought to the literal picture, and consider the disrespect involved in the man's casual behaviour. He had better have stayed away than insult the host by coming in his every-day clothes. Apply this to our own easy-going religion.
- (c) Then contrast ourselves with the saints, a contrast not of external circumstances but of interior appreciation. They earnestly desired, we lightly accept; they sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, we seek nothing; they strove, we scarcely trouble ourselves.

III.—*The appreciation of the saints.*

- (a) We cannot at first duly appreciate; even to perceive with desire what is greatly beyond us implies a power which is indeed a promise of ultimate attainment, and this power is the fruit of much Christian training. At the beginning the saints were like us, but they cultivated the gifts of God until they became able to perceive their true value.
- (b) Two elements combine to produce this appreciation; strenuous faithfulness in life, and practice of the presence of God. The two must act in combination. But the saints did not strive to be "saints," they strove that it might not be said of them that "they who were bidden were not worthy." We who make light of it have no such engrossing purpose, only in theory do we suppose that we must say, "Lord, I am not worthy."
- (c) The consideration of the saints should aid us to correct our superficial estimate of the things of God. It is just they, who while on earth were so far above us, who most sincerely realized themselves unworthy of the least of these God's mercies, and who by entering into the mind of God perceived his thoughts towards them of good, and committed themselves to his care. Take their appreciation as a truer estimate than your own, and by following them learn to see with their eyes.

Laymen and Priests

EMBERTIDE

"The perfecting of the saints for the work of ministry."—Eph. iv. 12.

Picture: the inter-relationship of the parts of the body.

Resolve: to pay more heed to the office of the priesthood.

I.—*The work of ministry.*

- (a) S. Paul has been describing the one body united in the one spirit, replete with the gifts which come from the victorious power of the ascended Christ. These gifts are men, living gifts of influence and example; gifts of loving patience; gifts intellectual and spiritual. But he has specially in view the Church as an organized society.
- (b) His conception as put forth in this verse is that of a society of members, each of whom is a gift contributing to the whole. The immediate office of the clergy is towards the saints, that is towards the body of the faithful. Their perfecting is the direct work of the clergy. And by "perfecting" he means their adequate equipment for their own ministry.
- (c) The saints thus equipped have their own ministry, one in one way and one in another. A good example is the household of Stephanas, who addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints (1 Cor. xvi. 15). Or, we may recall the importance which S. Paul ascribes to the relationship of the Church towards those that are without. And the ultimate issue, produced by the universal ministry of the living gifts, is the building up of the Body of Christ.

II.—*The two-fold ministry.*

- (a) That this two-fold ministry is essential to the work of the Church there will not be two opinions. Whether the clergy do not neglect their primary duty and encroach upon the ministry of the laymen is worth consideration. That the layman's ministry—not of teaching and preaching but of the example and influence of godly life and conversation—requires much perfecting will scarcely be doubted.
- (b) But consider how changed would be the mind of the laymen towards the clergy if this two-fold ministry were adequately realized. There would be no further charges of priestcraft; it would be the laymen who would demand that their clergy should be more priestly, as they realized more fully their own need of spiritual equipment for a life of power.
- (c) Too often to-day the clergy are more social and less priestly than they ought to be, because they are missing their vocation in the burden of "serving tables"; because they are doing the work of others rather than teaching them to do it; because they are endeavouring to adapt themselves to a congregation which has no conception of ministry.

III.—*Laymen and their priests.*

- (a) The layman who realizes his ministry will appreciate the spiritual needs of his clergy, and will pray for them that they may be spiritual men able to minister to their saints. It is one of the weaknesses of our Church life that we do not sufficiently appreciate the importance of a body of clergy supported by prayers and by the sympathy of those who have addicted themselves to ministry.
- (b) Reflect a little upon the temptations of the clergy; to disappointment and depression under irresponsiveness; to routine in the performance of spiritual duties. It is required of the clergy that they shall know him who alone can forgive sins, that they shall be able to minister to the sick, and to heal the broken-hearted. What if these are the very things which are growing stale in their lives, while they are not helped to recover themselves by the prayers of those to whom they minister? Consider, too, whether the clergy are doing their duty if they do not teach these things to their people.
- (c) Four times in the year we are called upon to pray with fasting for those who are to be ordained. What an opportunity for instruction! (Rom. xv. 30 ff.; Eph. vi. 18, 19; Col. iv. 2, 3; 1 Thess. v. 25; 2 Thess. iii. 1). These special times accentuate an habitual duty, to pray for my own clergy, for all the clergy, for theological colleges.

Able Ministers

EMBERTIDE

"Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament."—2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.

Consider: S. Paul as one who realized the ability of the gospel of grace.

Resolve: prayer for priests that they may be spiritual men.

I.—*"Able ministers."*

- (a) Open to some misunderstanding. It is true that all ability of ministry is of God, not only in that all natural gifts are from him, but that further these gifts require supernatural sanctification for the work of the ministry. But this is not S. Paul's thought, but rather that we are made ministers of a covenant which has the ability of grace. The gospel is the power of God. Compare a somewhat similar misinterpretation of 1 Tim. i. 12.
- (b) The old covenant was not able. The difference between the two covenants is not that the one was a law and the other forgives. The law of God is unalterable, and the standard is not lowered, but raised in the new covenant (Heb. x. 28-31). The difference is that under the law man was left in his own weakness and inability, but that under grace he receives the power of God.
- (c) This ability of the gospel is given to priests. They receive it as do all Christians, and they must use it very freely in their own lives. But further they receive it for their ministry; to be called of God is the guarantee of his sufficiency of grace. But S. Paul is thinking rather of the gospel to be preached by Christians, than of the spiritual support of the preacher. Pray that the clergy may boldly deliver the gospel of the grace of God's power.

II.—*"Of the new covenant."*

- (a) The new covenant is of the spirit and not of the letter. Not merely that the old covenant was enshrined in special enactments, and the new is the expression of principles, but that the old covenant was a law, and the new one is the covenant of the Holy Spirit, which gives life (Rom. viii. 6-10). This new covenant had been foreshadowed by Jeremiah (xxxi. 31-34).
- (b) Elsewhere S. Paul has expressed the same truth when he wrote that the gospel was the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth (Rom. i. 16). The distinction between the two covenants is strongly realized through the characteristic revelations of sacrifices and sacraments.
- (c) The priest, as a minister of the sacraments, ought to realize the power of God, and boldly to apply it and preach it also. It is a snare of his life to be always pointing out to men their duty rather than to lead them to look for grace to help them and to strengthen their weakness. We lose heart less frequently from not knowing what we ought to do than from not realizing how we are to be able to do it. Our priests should be great preachers of the Holy Spirit.

III.—*"Our sufficiency."*

- (a) To realize the character of Christianity, that it is God's power working effectively in the heart of man, provides the basis for the conviction that sufficiency is not in one's self. Here the Jews and S. Paul were in conflict. S. Paul had arrived at the conviction of his gospel through his conversion (see 2 Cor. iv. 6). The Jewish Christian was taking hold of Jesus Christ and making him merely a Jewish Messiah.
- (b) Such experience, varying in form, but always possessing the realization through personal experience of what God has done by his own power, is the condition that is required by an effective Christian ministry. And the laymen will be very far astray from knowing their own needs, if they can be indifferent to a spiritually-minded clergy.
- (c) And no priest, who realizes that he is a minister of so awful a power as God's grace, can be other than one who trembles that such a gift should be delivered to earthen vessels to distribute. A priest, who is filled with self-importance, instead of being humble beyond others, makes a terrible self-revelation of his own inexperience of the grace of God.

Trembling for the Ark of God

EMBERTIDE

"His heart trembled for the ark of God."—1 Sam. iv. 13.

Picture: aged Eli sitting by the wayside while the battle was in progress.

Resolve: pray in the spirit of Ps. xxxi. 22, P.B.V.

I.—*Eli: the men of Bethshemesh: Uzzah.*

- (a) He has no place among the judges in the great roll-call of faith's heroes (Heb. xi.). He was indeed not a heroic man, except in his death, wherein he proved himself more of a hero than many a stronger man. He could die for his faith, when national defeat, and the loss of his two sons, left him unmoved, waiting to hear what had happened to the ark.
- (b) The men of Bethshemesh looked into the ark (1 Sam. vi. 19), when the Philistines sent it back to Israel. To them the ark was so sacred that it was inseparably associated in their minds with the presence of Jehovah. The manner of its return was to them of religious import (ver. 14); and yet they dared to treat it with a familiarity which lacked awe.
- (c) Twenty years later David brought the ark from its sojourning place to Jerusalem. One of the sons of the man who had been consecrated to keep it put out his hand to touch the ark, because the oxen stumbled (2 Sam. vi. 6, 7). Eli died from grief: the men of Bethshemesh were smitten for looking into that which was not for the eyes of men: Uzzah was struck by God for his rashness.

II.—*Trembling: looking into: touching.*

- (a) These records of an old age speak to us in a strange language of something which belongs to our own times. By the ark of God we understand the vitality of the Christian religion. We are conscious that there is much to make us tremble whether God's very presence is to be denied a national place in our life. We seem to fear at times that there is such license and frivolity of treatment in handling the faith that men will soon have no fear of God. And again we are spiritually offended when some one rashly dares to try to save religion by adapting it to modern fashions.
- (b) But let us also fear. What is the ark for which we fear? Is it the mere symbols of religion, the fashions of an age? The ark itself has gone together with the tables of stone. Is it for these perishable expressions of religious ideas that we tremble? We need to be sure that it is truly for the presence of God that we are concerned.
- (c) Consider that if the secular world is not to look into the ark without fear it must be because we, priests and people, by our lives and by our reverence, make the ark of God's Church respected. It will never be done by fighting for our rights, by treating religion as a branch of politics. The ark had suffered in its reputation by its residence among the Philistines: beware lest we, who are the guardians of God's law, are like unto the Philistines or the sons of Eli, rather than like Eli.

III.—*Trembling for the ark: touching it.*

- (a) Eli did well to tremble for his sons who made the Lord's offering to be abhorred, and for his nation which would suffer disaster without Jehovah, and indeed for himself also; but he had no need to tremble for the ark. God will always vindicate his own honour.
- (b) The ark may shake when the oxen stumble; but Uzzah need have no fear that the Almighty will let his true ark be dashed to the ground. He needs no human support; religion is not in the hands of the priests; albeit if they be like Hophni and Phinehas, or even like weak and pious Eli, he may allow his ark to be taken, that through this the Philistines may learn to fear him.
- (c) In times of political strife over religion, when temporalities are being challenged, and when religious education is at stake, in times of religious conflict, when men offer their own compromises, while others have cast aside all respect for revelation, learn to reverence weak Eli, while yet profiting by the sequel which he did not live to see. But fear to be like Uzzah.

Melchizedek

EMBERTIDE

"Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."—Ps. cx. 4; Heb. v. 6.

Picture: the meeting of Melchizedek and Abraham.

Pray: for the work of the theological colleges.

I.—*Melchizedek in the Old Testament.*

- (a) The early Jewish tradition of Melchizedek, the priest king, representative of a pre-Abrahamic revelation, has found an enduring place in the national records; and later Jewish editings have not obliterated the tradition (Gen. xiv.). Such an one blessed father Abraham.
- (b) The post-exilic age of Judaism revived the tradition in psalmody under the guidance of the same inspiration which had preserved the early narrative (Ps. cx.). The ideal king, like Melchizedek, is seen to combine the priestly office with the regal. Holiness, victory, and intimate relationship with God are to mark him.
- (c) Consider this double reference. Early Jewish tradition saw nothing derogatory to its religion in the recognition of a divine priesthood outside its national borders. Behind Judaism as well as outside it (cp. Jethro) lay revelation. The later reference is, however, dependent on the former. Melchizedek is become a figure in holy Scripture, foreshadowing a divine truth to be revealed in the future. The Jewish priesthood is not sufficient to represent the ideal.

II.—*Melchizedek in the New Testament.*

- (a) Centuries again passed, and for a third time an unknown writer has seized upon the person of Melchizedek. At length it is seen that the Son of God alone satisfies the requirements. Melchizedek had become almost a myth to us, until recent archæological researches revived him, by the living picture of his age and conditions in Jerusalem, as a king not ruling by the right of descent but by the appointment and support of his Egyptian suzerain. Thus do the recent discoveries explain the language in Heb. vii. 3, which the writer has mystically interpreted.
- (b) His treatment of Melchizedek is by contrast illustrative of the character of the Judaic priesthood which could not be final because it was not original (vii. 5 ff.). We need one who is inherently priest, whose life is not transitory, and who has no need that atonement be made for himself (vii. 8, 23 ff., ix. 24 ff.).
- (c) Upon this greater priest falls the fulfilment of the Melchizedek ideal in the Jewish traditions. He sits for ever at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, and of necessity has somewhat to offer. All is now removed into the heavenlies (viii.–x.) into which we have boldness to enter through the blood of Jesus (x. 19).

III.—*The Christian priest.*

- (a) The writer takes no account of the priests ministering to the congregations to whom he writes. He does not offer them as a substitute for the Jewish priesthood; he goes at once to the fountain-head. Jesus Christ is our Priest; he offers, he represents, he intercedes, he blesses, he pardons. And all is within the new and spiritual covenant.
- (b) To the Christian priest this is at once his sole apology and his perpetual warning. To the Christian layman it is likewise his only interpretation of the Christian ministry. He receives the sacraments from the one Priest; the one Priest offers in the spiritual sphere where time and place are not. And the priest, too, is subject to the one Priest; by him he is ordained, sustained, absolved.
- (c) At the end of the epistle the readers' thoughts are turned to the ordained ministry in their midst. Happy were they in having had priests to whom he could point as evidence of the power of the grace of God (xiii. 7), and in now possessing priests full of vigilance and devoted service (xiii. 17).

The Farewell of Miletus

EMBERTIDE

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock."—Acts xx. 28.

Picture: the scene of the clerical gathering at Miletus.

Resolve: to reverence the priesthood by praying for it.

I.—*"Over the which . . . made . . . overseers."*

- (a) These were the clergy of Ephesus, whom S. Paul had ordained (Acts xx. 17): but he does not hesitate to say that the Holy Ghost had appointed them. And their duty it was to oversee—make visitation of—their people. For this, then, they were responsible to the Holy Ghost.
- (b) The R.V. reads "in the which." The Ephesian elders were not apart from their people on a superior level; they were themselves members of the flock which they were to watch and care for. The shepherd is himself one of the sheep, only differing from the others by the grave burden of a divine appointment.
- (c) The responsibility of the oversight is emphasized by the reminder of the purchase price of the flock, and the shepherd-sheep is part of the purchased flock. The great Shepherd and Bishop, whose blood was shed as of a lamb without blemish (1 Pet. i. 19; ii. 25), has thus purchased the flock in the which he bestows his own grace of shepherding upon some of the sheep.

II.—*"Take heed unto yourselves."*

- (a) A sheep may well tremble to undertake the task of shepherding, and in a flock valued at such a purchase price, even though his appointment be by bestowal of the Shepherd's powers. He must at least first of all, and for the flock's sake, take heed to himself lest the gifts bestowed upon him for the good of all be misused, neglected, or undervalued.
- (b) He must take heed to himself that through self-knowledge he may know the sheep: take heed to the shepherding of himself, that he may know how to shepherd the other sheep; be in close communication with the great Shepherd, that he may learn how to apply his gifts of shepherding.
- (c) Nor can the other sheep afford to be indifferent to their shepherd-sheep. For their sakes he has this burden of responsibility laid upon him. Let them regard him as one of the flock, but not be unmindful of his special relation to the whole; and as one who shepherds yet is also a sheep. If the overseers are to take heed to themselves and to all the flock, is it too much that the flock shall also take heed to the sheep who have such special relation to the whole?

III.—*"Feed the Church."*

- (a) Feed, that is, as the Greek has it, "shepherd" the flock. Shepherding involves protection, nourishment, and guidance. There is the superintendence of the flock to understand it, direct it, lead it, and all this without driving. How much may wise counsel, frank speech, and true sympathy assist the shepherd in this task!
- (b) There is protection. S. Paul was thinking of the wolves, about to make havoc through the subtlety of false teaching. The flock is to be guarded by sound teaching, and by protection against the ingress of error. There is need of clear outlook lest any of the flock speak perverse things, as well as also lest wolves in sheep's clothing enter in and spare not the flock (Acts xx. 29-30). What if the shepherd-sheep be himself led astray by his own flock, or be not watchful when the wolves are about to enter in (Acts xx. 31)?
- (c) And there is feeding. The sacraments are distributed to the flock by the shepherd-sheep from the hand of the great Shepherd. Woe be to the shepherds if they think that bustling about like a shepherd's dog, barking and running here and there in busy self-importance, is any substitute for solid food, faithfully distributed and lovingly commended. The flock must be instructed to desire and to appreciate its food.

Thou Man of God!

EMBERTIDE

"Thou man of God."—2 Kings i. 9.

Consider: Elijah as a type of the priest, or religious; and further, as a city set upon a hill.

Pray: for all priests and religious that they may be faithful and strong.

I.—*How Elijah was a man of God.*

- (a) He held an office greatly respected by the Jews when not brought into disrepute by being unworthily held. Men will not continue to respect any office, which its holders disrespect by their lives. Priests and religious must make their office respected; there is no call to make it popular. S. Paul said to Timothy "Let no man despise (*i.e.* have reason to despise) thy youth."
- (b) Elijah identified himself with his office; his whole life was thrown into it; he was a man with a commission from God, and a man of converse with him. A priest and a religious differ in many ways, but they are alike in this that both have to testify, through a life of personal communion with him, to the universal authority of God over all life.
- (c) Picture Elijah on the hill (2 Kings i. 9), and his title "Thou man of God." The priest and the religious are like a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid. By public profession each is pre-eminently the man of God. Elijah made the messengers feel that. How terrible, if through slackness or unfaithfulness, men, instead of despising me the more because of my office, should learn through me to despise that office.

II.—*How Elijah earned his title.*

- (a) By his asceticism. He did not spare himself: it was by his life that he preached God; neither the world nor self attracted him. He made himself not of the world, not because he despised it, or to save himself, but that he might save it. He risked his life for his nation and generation. Had he been of the world he could not have helped it.
- (b) This hardness with himself was a preparation for fellowship with God, wherein he saw reality and not the appearance of life which the world sees. It was through this fellowship that he was able to reflect the divine holiness in a life of boldness. To oppose the opinion of the world is not the mark of a character strong in natural strength, for such a character more often acquiesces in the world's natural judgment, sharing with it its character of pride.
- (c) By his severity, which was felt to be the reflection of his fellowship with God in relation to his age. Through mortification, and by penetrating into the burning flames of God's holiness, he had acquired not a conventional severity, which could be shocked when public opinion required it of a prophet, but the hardness of truth which could cause him to blaze with divine wrath against the Baal worship of which public opinion and policy approved.

III.—*Elijah a type of the man of God.*

- (a) Consider that we ought not to lose these lessons, because some aspects of his life are Jewish and not Christian. The gospel reference to this scene, finely perceived in the early Church (S. Luke ix. 53-55 R.V. and A.V.), must recall to Christians the office of the Holy Spirit to guard severity from harshness, and to direct severity to its legitimate objects.
- (b) Elijah directs our minds to a true estimate of our burden. The Man of God is to flee all love of the world (1 Tim. vi. 9-11) and to be thoroughly furnished unto all good works by study of God's word (2 Tim. iii. 14-17). Our greatest danger does not lie in thinking too much of ourselves, but in underestimating the burden of our office, which we bring into contempt by our commonplaceness.
- (c) Elijah was not alone; the 7000 (1 Kings xix. 18) were reflected in him. At Embertide consider the awful warning of "Like people like priest" (Hos. iv. 9), and "My people love to have it so" (Jer. v. 31). An easy-going priesthood—busy yet lax—is popular; religious are unpopular just because they are supposed to be strict. The 7000 faithful must support both.

The Priest's Nearness to the Fire

EMBERTIDE

"Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"—Isa. xxxiii. 14.

Picture: fire as a symbol of holiness.

Resolve: a more solemn use of Ember days.

I.—*The mind of Isaiah.*

- (a) For a whole generation he had been teaching Israel to fear and trust the holiness of God; to the prophet this revelation of God was not just something beautiful to contemplate; it was rather something awful to live with. Isaiah conceived it under the symbol of a penetrating atmosphere of fire; and though he warned, Israel did not heed.
- (b) Now that Sennacherib was overshadowing Jerusalem, Isaiah's message was coming home. The heathen had dared to assail the city of God; Hezekiah's prayer was heard, and a disaster had overtaken the Assyrian army. Isaiah saw both in this near approach and in the disaster the work of God; his holiness was overshadowing the hill of Sion, and his holiness was a consuming fire which brooked not disregard.
- (c) The people were relieved, but Isaiah reflected. Sennacherib had felt something of the power of Jehovah, and was overawed (2 Kings xix. 35, 36); but what about Israel in Jerusalem, the dwelling-place of God, in the very midst of the devouring fire! The fire of God burning continually on the altar of burnt offering became to the prophet as it were a continual warning of his consuming holiness.

II.—*The priest's official nearness to the everlasting burnings.*

- (a) Who, like the priest, dwells continually with the devouring fire? In the activity of his life he is to demonstrate the holiness of God, without being distracted by his much business. At the altar, in all sacramental acts, he stands in the midst of the burnings; in his private life, his reading, his devotions, he ought to live in the midst of the flames.
- (b) Yet consider with what equanimity he can come to regard this nearness. Prayer may lose its unction, the freshness of the first masses disappear; the ministration of other sacraments become a routine. Reflect upon the ordination resolutions, and how the priestly life was to be the first thing. Then, indeed, one realized the nearness of the everlasting burnings.
- (b) God has brought every priest officially very near to his holiness, which is why his life is the most dangerous upon earth. The devouring fire is either burning up his distracted soul into nothing, leaving a lifeless priest, or purging away the dross, and bringing him personally closer to his holiness.

III.—*"Evisceratio mentis"* (S. Bernard).

- (a) Picture Israel in the days of Ahaz and Hezekiah, as so manifestly living in the sphere of God's working that it is difficult to believe that they did not realize their condition. Yet to them life was full of occupation and distraction, foreign alliance and alarm, political intrigue and court parties; and Isaiah could get no sober hearing.
- (b) We turn to our own days and find ourselves similarly in a whirl of occupation; in an age of strain the priest must be in it. "Beneath this surface movement, I fear, one discovers that there is a shrinking of central impetus. . . . We whirl about more, but advance less. . . . In days of old there were men whose whole life was absorbed in the great centre—God" (Père Grátry). We too become unconscious that we are dwelling with the devouring fire.
- (c) And if the priest's spiritual life be underfed he is robbing his people of the living bread: to them he is to be the man of God, who has come to them from the Presence. God seems to have been preparing us for the strain of the priesthood in these days by granting more frequent communions, by revival of retreats and the practice of meditation, and by the restored medicine and discipline of confession. The everlasting fires must kindle the priest with the inspiration of God.

Feed the Flock of God

EMBERTIDE

"Our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep."—Heb. xiii. 20.
"Feed the flock of God."—1 Peter v. 2.

Picture: S. John x. 14, 15, R.V.

Resolve: to learn shepherding by my experience as sheep.

I.—*Shepherd and sheep.*

- (a) To the chief Shepherd (1 Peter v. 4) every pastor stands as under-shepherd and also as sheep. We do not learn our craft as a set of practices to be acquired by skill and technical knowledge, a matter of being taught professional habits. We learn in the school of inspiration, from what the Shepherd is to ourselves.
- (b) There is fellowship between the Shepherd and his sheep. They hear his voice, and to a stranger they will not answer. The stranger often calls very alluringly. What fashions pass over our teaching as the years go by! Are they all the voice of the Good Shepherd? Or the voice of the under-shepherd may change its tone, although his words are the same, monotonously so even. Perchance it is that we are not ourselves so familiar now with the tones of the chief Shepherd, his voice is become less precious to us.
- (c) He has described the fellowship as that which exists between the Father and the Son: it is the fellowship of nature. The shepherd must go before his sheep in experience. He gets out of touch with his Good Shepherd if the fellowship is not quite fresh or is not close; and then he will not be able to shepherd his flock.

II.—*"That great Shepherd."*

- (a) We are not independent shepherds having to be to our sheep what the Good Shepherd is to us, but under-shepherds bringing our sheep together with ourselves to him as Shepherd. Let this stimulate us, that we may not suffer from faintheartedness. It is a grave responsibility to be an under-shepherd with him as chief Shepherd, because he will say to us, "Why did you not bring this sheep to me?"
- (b) Beware of ever thinking that it is just as well that I am not too devotional, or I might be above my people's experience. Consider that to hear the Shepherd's voice day by day, and many times a day, to know it as a living voice, to miss it if not heard, is to be going on in experience. Thus shall I know my duty, catch his tones, lead my sheep on even as I am being led on.
- (c) Beware too of thinking that I feed my flock with the sacraments, and that food is good, and therefore I shall not harm the flock if I am not diligently listening to the voice of the Great Shepherd. To feed the flock is to shepherd it (so Acts xx. 28, and 1 Peter v. 2). Feeding is only one side of the shepherd's work. He must lead the way, choose the path, protect, watch over, win the confidence of the flock; and, too, he must search out the sheep, and bring them back to the fold.

III.—*Shepherd.*

- (a) What an unassuming title! See 1 Peter v. 3. We think of priests as of those who must be respected for their office; but Jesus Christ called himself a shepherd. What eastern ever thinks of a shepherd as one of high rank, as one to claim honour of men, and be accounted great?
- (b) In England great courtesy is still shown to priests. May we never lose it by claiming it as a right, or by abusing the courtesy! The chief Shepherd said, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart"; and "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." As sheep let us thus learn from the Shepherd, that we may be shepherds like him to our sheep.
- (c) "The good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep." But how? In loneliness, where there is none to see the heroism, where the shepherd is only thinking of the sheep. Then truly he has caught the spirit from the chief Shepherd, who has loved him, and has given his life for him. His experience as sheep has resulted in forming his character as shepherd.

Priests of the High Priest

EMBERTIDE

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest."—Heb. iv. 14.

Consider : priests of the High Priest.

Resolve : to reverence the office of the priest.

I.—*A priest's duty is to offer to God.*

- (a) It is often said and truly that a priest's first duty is to offer the holy sacrifice. Rightly understood this is so; and priests must be prepared to be misunderstood by those who think that their first duty is to minister to the people. But such misunderstanding is largely the result of the priests' failure to realize their vocation. They too often limit their aim to good influence or a good example, or regard their priestly relationship to God too formally. The priest's relation to God demands of him the offering to God of his whole life in will and faculty, and not only the offering of the holy sacrifice.
- (b) The priest does not merely offer himself to God: every Christian has to do that. He offers Jesus Christ to God the Father, and he offers him not merely for himself and for his people, but also for the glory of God. Thus the ministering at the altar must be the highest service of his life. He is a minister in the deepest solemnity of divine fellowship.
- (c) In the realization of this he must be sanctified in his character by the spirit of gravity, and uplifted to superhuman faith and be filled with divine love. If at the altar he is to know that he prevails as priest, if he is to have therein the certitude of the revelation and its power, he must share with the High Priest in the gifts of his priestly fellowship.

II.—*The fellowship of the High Priest.*

- (a) It is a mistake to suppose that priests are always either forgetting their high calling or else are magnifying themselves. They often suffer from a self-depreciation which disqualifies them, and which arises out of a fear of their office. They lose heart because they are so little able to fulfil their high calling.
- (b) This is the time when they should consider closely him whose priests they are. A priest who does not meditate on his priesthood, but only on his pastoral life, is losing sight of the power in which his ministry to the flock is to be exercised. He must consider his life as that of one who does not take this honour (Heb. v. 4) to himself, but who has been called to respond to the fellowship of priestly life and efficiency.
- (c) Consider how frequently the divine Minister of mankind thus stimulated his disciples. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." "Be not afraid." "Greater works than these shall ye do." "Ask and ye shall receive." Say frequently, Called of God, and made able ministers by the new covenant.

III.—*"Taken from among men."*

- (a) The priest should enter into fullest sympathy with human life. To become priest our Lord entered into the experience of human life, shared its joys and sorrows, endured its conflict. The priest has not much time for recreation, but his fellowship with the High Priest must be such as will broaden his sympathy with life. His temptation is to become overstrained.
- (b) In his human weakness, his failings and shortcomings, he must call boldly upon the High Priest. He is not taken up into the high priesthood of Christ without also being taken up into the grace and mercy of it, its power and sympathy. He is to share in his victories.
- (c) Consider the temptations of the High Priest. We are not less priests because we are tempted; temptation is a qualifying mark of priesthood; and especially the priest will feel keenly the temptations which arise from disappointment, sense of failure, and the being misunderstood because he is viewing his responsibility in the light of his priesthood and not judging it by public opinion. The priest must use very much the fellowship which is revealed to us in the words, "We have not an high priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

The Preach Christ Jesus

EMBERTIDE

"We preach . . . Christ Jesus the Lord."—2 Cor. iv. 5.

Picture: a congregation hanging on the words of a preacher.

Resolve: to pray week by week for the Sunday's preaching.

I.—*The preacher.*

- (a) How can he preach a gospel which has not grasped him? And the gospel is not a set of views, a following of the Church's year: nor is it—valuable as that is—an exposition of Holy Scripture. The preacher must have Christ in his heart (2 Cor. iv. 6), Christ in his life; he must know his power. Life must preach.
- (b) This is sometimes obscured in the preacher's mind, because he confounds it with ranting, or because it seems to him that all his sermons would then be directed to conversion. Such confusions arise from inexperience in the life of the Christian. If he knows Christ more deeply he will not make these mistakes. Let the preacher see first to himself as a general preparation for his sermon.
- (c) The temptations of a preacher are many and subtle. And he cannot suppose that a sermon is necessarily what it should be because it is one which, if printed, would seem to be almost Pauline in its earnest insistence upon Christ as the centre of life. No preaching is truly Christian which is not the fruit of much prayer. And in this preparation of prayer he must be supported.

II.—*The people.*

- (a) The people often help to make or mar the preacher. When I criticize a sermon, is it really its preaching of Christ Jesus that I criticize or some accident of voice, literary taste, or intellectual gift? Do I ever let myself speak slightly of preaching, as though it were a matter of little moment? Do I open my heart to the preaching, expecting God to speak to me through it?
- (b) The best preacher is the true pastor. He preaches to his own people, who are in his heart, whom he knows, and who know the reality and conviction with which he preaches (1 Thess. ii. 8). If he speaks of their faults he speaks with love: if he pleads with them it is because he yearns over them. He knows their temptations, difficulties and responsibilities, and he brings Christ into touch with them all. "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."
- (c) The preacher is sent not merely to deliver the message which is true, but to deliver it to these people in such way that they shall realize that the gospel has power (1 Thess. i. 5). A stranger may be God's instrument to bring conviction to my people, and to bring in the harvest of my ministerial sowings; but how terrible if afterwards my people contrast me with him, and find that I have nothing to offer them.

III.—*"Christ Jesus the Lord."*

- (a) The combined words form a creed. S. Paul preached Jesus that he is the true Messiah (the Christ), and that he is the Lord. It is no gospel if it is not a creed; here we have God and men, human sympathy and divine power; we have the gospel for Jew and Gentile: the fulfilment of divine purpose. It was not S. Paul who attracted, it was his gospel, the substance of it, which won by its own worth.
- (b) The combined words emphasize various aspects of revelation. The preaching embraces Jesus crucified the life of sinners, Christ the unfold of history, and him too as God, the Lord, claiming the surrender and loyalty of man. But it is not the crucifixion or the Messiahship or the divinity which is the gospel, but it is he.
- (c) But the outstanding emphasis in the words is on the word Lord. We preach Christ Jesus as Lord (R.V.). If men contrasted S. Paul with other preachers and found differences, he could not change that feature of his preaching, which made himself of no account but Jesus Christ supreme, authoritative, possessed of the name which is above every name. The whole revelation of God to man is come through Jesus Christ (2 Cor. iv. 6).

Prayer for Priests

EMBERTIDE

"Brethren, pray for us."—1 Thess. v. 25.

Picture: a church meeting in Thessalonica; they are praying now for S. Paul, now for S. Silas, now for S. Timothy. What earnestness of prayer!

Resolve: to make a private rule to pray for my clergy, and for the supply and adequate training of ordinands.

I.—*Three calls to intercession.*

- (a) My own needs and indebtedness. Consider what you owe to the clergy on your own account, which you can best repay by intercession; your many sacramental gifts, what you have learned from them, how you have been helped by them. Consider too that you still need them, and how much you need spiritually-minded clergy.
- (b) My concern for the brethren. They too need the clergy, and you are concerned in your brethren's welfare. The clergy are your ministers to them and to the heathen; it is chiefly through their agency that you can fulfil your obligations, and your prayers must accompany your alms.
- (c) My interest in the kingdom of Christ. Nearest to the heart lies the desire to hasten the coming of his kingdom by the extension of his glory throughout the world: the clergy share his priesthood and minister it to his people. It is his glory which is obscured by a worldly, cold or dishonoured priesthood. It is *his* kingdom which is extended by a faithful priesthood.

II.—*The needs of the clergy.*

- (a) Their temptation to worldliness. Consider that the clergy have almost entire disposal of their time, and that many people lightly regard them as social conveniences, while others foolishly flatter them. What great support they need from the prayers of the faithful to preserve them from worldliness, from prophesying smooth things. Or, the temptation to worldly-mindedness from over-absorption in material works.
- (b) Their danger of familiarity with holy things. They continually minister at the altar and are occupied with holy things; it is a fearful responsibility. Remember too that it is quite possible to become mechanical in dealing with human lives; routine may rob them of the sense of sacredness. S. Paul and his fellow-workers felt the need of the prayers of the Thessalonians.
- (c) Their disappointment in the greatness of their task. The faithful priest has also another great temptation; he sees his responsibility and his unworthiness; when disappointed and over-worked he is sorely tempted to forget the great High Priest. How can you help him here?

III.—*The supply of clergy.*

- (a) Vocation is the gift of God, and his gifts are adapted to the measure of our desires. A faithful priesthood is one sure pledge of a liberal gift of vocations; and where there is the spirit to pray zealously for the supply of clergy, there too will be the condition of a liberal answer. Consider all this, and that prayers must be offered that the faithful may believe strongly in the truth of vocation.
- (b) Fitting intellectual equipment. Think of the responsibility of the theological colleges, and how great is the strain upon all students. Tutors and students should be in our prayers, that they may love the truth, and hold it in the fear of God. Consider the danger to offer an inadequate preparation by reason of the urgent need of clergy and the expense involved.
- (c) The spiritual preparation of character. Vocation must be cherished; so we must add to our thoughts the springing up and growth of the seed sown; the young must treasure their calling in piety, that it may grow in strength. Students in universities and colleges require to mature in grace. Those in straitened circumstances make us think of the responsibility of the Church not to lose God's gifts through blindness or lukewarmness. What will any seat of theological learning be worth, if it be not filled with the gifts of the Holy Ghost?

Removing the Ashes

EMBERTIDE

"The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar."—Levit. vi. 13.

Picture: the priests' continual care of the burnt offering.

Resolve: spiritual vigilance with self.

I.—Consider the daily waste.

- (a) The meditation is concerned with the burnt offering. It is the thought of the consecration of the whole life by the fire from heaven, continually replenished. See Rom. xii. 1, 2. The priest's life is not a profession; it is an oblation. Seize one point from this ministry of the burnt offering (Levit. vi. 8-13); the daily waste and its removal, lest the fire be choked.
- (b) The fire on the altar will consume all that it can; but some dead ashes remain. There must be this wastage, arising from the limitations and infirmities of human nature; arising also, alas! from our slowness of spiritual growth. Some matter burns better than other.
- (c) But how is this wastage increased if the fire is not kept well supplied, and the draught is not supplied by the Spirit of God! There must be the continual replenishment, and the wind of God must be able to blow upon the burnt offering. But even this spiritual activity requires for its effect that the ashes be removed daily.

II.—The priest in his priestly garments.

- (a) The priesthood is a state; the priest cannot deal with himself other than as a priest. His is not the mere fulfilment of certain obligations. He is to put on his priestly garments (Levit. vi. 10) for the removal of the daily wastage. It is the daily examination of his life as a priest.
- (b) And he is to put these ashes beside the altar at which he ministers as priest, where he stands in the person of the High Priest, where he communicates his flock. His personal life and his exercise of priesthood are inseparable in that daily task, for in the priesthood his life is consecrated to God as a burnt offering.
- (c) Even the sins of his personal and private life are the sins of a priest. But the meditation goes deeper than actual sins; it contemplates mere wastage, loss of time, undue frivolity, wasted opportunity, superficiality in the personal devotional life. Let him thank God that he has provided even for priests, a means of removing these ashes.

III.—The place of the consumption of the sin offering.

- (a) But now, his examination over, he is to put off his priestly garments (Levit. vi. 11). It is now that the man himself is to bear his responsibility. The priest as man, not shielded by any official protection, is to go to the High Priest, and to learn through his own experience what the High Priest is for whom he is to minister to men.
- (b) And he is to go to the place of the consumption of the sin-offering (Levit. vi. 11; iv. 12). The priest, as sinner, is gone to him who is both Master and Saviour. These ashes of the daily life are to be treated as sin, and not lightly thrown aside. It is "a clean place," specially reserved for this purpose. In primitive language it would be a *taboo* spot. Hidden from the eyes of men, but known to God, there is the daily secret dealing with that life which God has consecrated to the priesthood; it has its mysteries, it has its dread, but it has its secret history which makes the fire grow brighter on the altar of life.
- (c) And this place is without the camp (Levit. vi. 11). The priest must be mindful that that is where the High Priest suffered, going forth and bearing his reproach (Heb. xiii. 11-13). He will find him a merciful High Priest. He will always find him there, although he has lost him in his day of toil. He will sanctify the priest there with his own blood; but he must also make the priest bear his reproach. It is the holy priest who bears his reproach.

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